DECEMBER
30th
1921
25c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

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Occupation or Business_____

ADVENTURE Dec. 30th, 1921

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 32 Number 3

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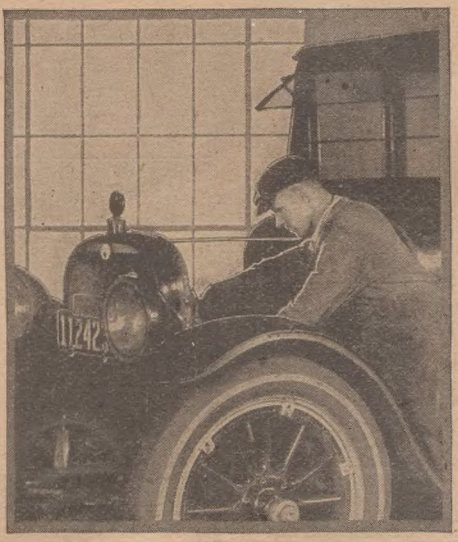

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- ☐ Business Correspondent
- ☐ BOOKKEEPER
- ☐ Stenographer & Typist
- ☐ Certified Public Accountant
- ☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
- ☐ Railway Accountant
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- ☐ AUTOMOBILES
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7 1-21

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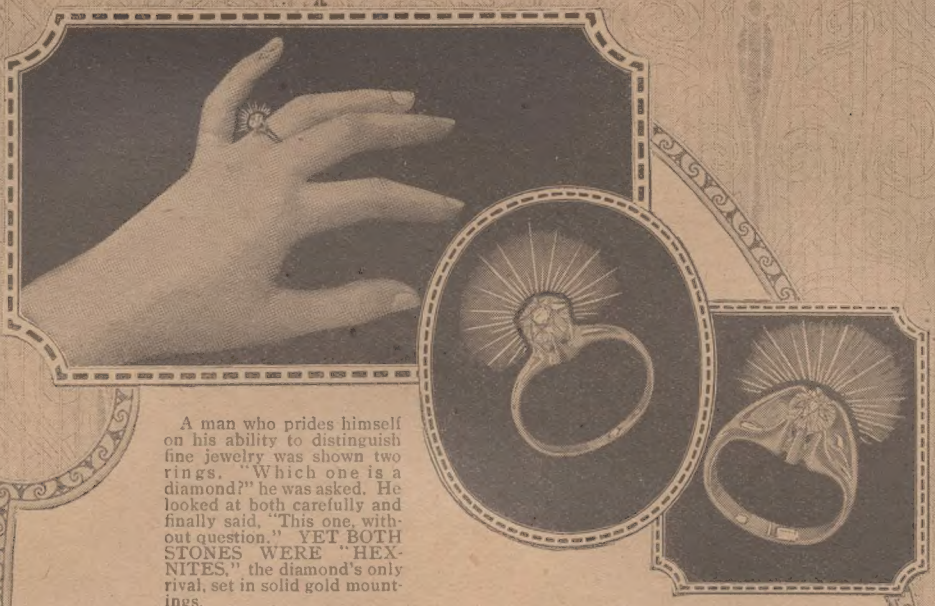

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Published Three Times a Month by The Ridgway Company

J. H. GANNON, President — C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance — Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 90 cents.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Don't forget the new dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Adventure

Vol. XXXII, No. III
December 30th 1921

The Jararaca

A Complete Novelette

By Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Tailed Men," "The Pathless Trail," etc.

DEEP in the Javary jungle stands a tree of death. Malevolent, repulsive, bristling with venomous thorns, it towers alone on the slimy clay bank of a nameless *ygarapé*. Near it grows no other tree; in its branches no monkeys play; nor do parrot nor toucan ever settle on it to rest their wings. It is shunned by all creatures save those hideous things which crawl and coil to strike death into the blood of the cleaner animals which walk on legs above them. Under it lurk only the dread *surucucu*—poisonous master of the bush—and the deadly *jararaca*.

Yet on the grisly trunk of this infernal growth gleams a symbol of hope. In the blazing sun of noonday, in the cool radiance of the midnight moon, this token shines on undimmed by the evil shade of the monstrous branches above. Its golden light strikes into the beady eyes of the serpents below, which rear their heads to hiss and dart forked tongues at it—in vain. Year by year it hangs there, flashing its message to the jungle creatures which see but do not understand; and year by year it shall hang there, until at last the malignant thing to which it clings shall fall in rot. For it is fastened deep and firm: fixed by sharp steel and the strength of a man's good right arm.

The keen steel still is there, driven far into the wood—the *machadinha* of a rubber-worker. But the man is there no more. He has gone out among other men, and with him he has taken the tale of the tree and the golden symbol.

The tree is the *assacu*—the poison-tree of the Amazon jungle. The symbol is a cross of gold, its chain knotted hard around the head and handle of the hatchet. The man is Lourenço Moraes, a broad-chested, steady-eyed *seringueiro* of the Amazon headwaters. And this is the tale of Lourenço:

IN THE season of the *verao*, when the great floods had ebbed and we rubber-workers could return to our labors on the vast *seringal* of Coronel Nunes, I was called into the office of the *coronel* himself. He was making up his gangs, which would go out into those parts of the swampy jungle where were rubber areas and toil there through the few months before the next rise of the waters. As I had been in charge of a gang the previous season, I expected another assignment of the same sort. But Coronel Nunes had other ideas.

"Lourenço," he said briskly, "you have spent the time of the floods at Remate de Males, growing fat and lazy. Now I shall give you some work which will shrink your belt."

I blinked. I certainly was not fat, nor had I idled the time away at the Javary town he named. While the floods swept

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the land I had made two long roving canoe journeys with a comrade of mine, and the pair of us had undergone much hardship and faced death more than once. So now I was puzzled until I saw the twinkle in the black eyes of my employer.

"It is true, *coronel*," I grinned then. "I have done nothing but paddle hundreds of miles, fight head-hunting *barbaros* and demons with tails, starve on *farinha* and *pirarucu*, and suffer from wounds. So of course I am fat."

He laughed.

"So I have heard," he told me. "That is why I have picked you for the work I have in mind. I have plenty of men who can boss gangs in fixed camps, but few who are such jungle-tramps as you. Now you are to take eight men whose names are here—" he tapped a list on his desk "—and scout for new rubber. You know what I want, and you may use your own judgment as to where to go. Your men will pack the supplies tomorrow. That is all."

But I did not go yet.

"Who are my men?" I asked.

He read the list. I shook my head.

"If you will pardon me, *coronel*," I objected, "I do not want all of those men. I do not want half of them. No, I do not want any of them!"

"Why?" he demanded, frowning. "They are good men."

"Good workmen, yes. They are of the best—as workmen. But a very good workman may be a very poor bushman. On a long scout into unknown jungle I should be so busy looking after those men that I should have no eyes left to see rubber."

He still frowned, but it was a frown of thought, not of anger. He had a very friendly feeling toward me because of some dangerous things I had done for him in the past, as well as much faith in my judgment. So now, instead of snapping out that I must obey orders, as he might have done with another man, he sat thinking. After a pause I added:

"Give me only one man, and let me pick the man. Two men travel more easily than nine, and——"

"And you will pick that rascal Pedro Andrada, your vagabond companion," he cut in.

"The same rascal who, though himself wounded, once saved the life of your son-in-law and afterward tracked down the man who had shot them both," I reminded him.

"Ah, yes," he admitted, his face softening.

"A stout-hearted, two-handed, merry comrade, and a better bushman than I," I went on.

He stared a moment at the list. Then he swiftly tore it in two and crumpled the pieces.

"As you will," he said. "That will give me seven more men for the gangs. You two reprobates may go as far as you like. But bring me back samples and reports of something big!"

"We shall try, *coronel*," I promised.

And out I went, hardly able to keep from singing and shouting. No dull labor in a fixed camp—weeks of prowling the bush with my comrade—permission to go as far as we liked! *Senhores*, while I hunted for Pedro I nearly burst with my news.

I found him at the big supply storehouse. With him were three of the men who had been listed to go with me. None of the four was working. Squatting in the shade, the three whom I had already rejected were listening to Pedro, who, with a cigaret between his fingers, leaned against the wall and talked lazily, as if only to pass the time. His back was toward me, and the squatting men were staring at him so fixedly that they neither saw nor heard me approach.

"At first I thought it must be a great *surucucu*, that giant snake which all men fear," Pedro was saying. "But it crept through the air, not along the ground. And then, as the glow of our little fire showed it more clearly, I saw that it had no head. Where a head should have been, comrades, was a great hand! And the thing which had seemed the body of a huge snake was a great dark arm, reaching stealthily toward that man who now slept.

"I could not move. I could not cry out. My tongue clung to my teeth and my blood turned to water. And while I lay there frozen, the awful hand closed over the head of that man and lifted him as easily as you or I would lift a frog. It drew him swiftly back into the blackness of the jungle—and we never saw him more.

"One scream he gave—one horrible groaning scream like that of a man crushed by the *surucucu*. That was the last sound

he made. And though we seized torches and plunged into the bush seeking him after the arm disappeared, we found no sign of him. No, nor even the next day, when we searched every foot of ground—we never found a trace.

"And I can tell you, friends, I am glad I do not have to go where you are going. I do not want to be within reach of that demon again. The very memory of what I saw makes me cold even now."

I stood where I had stopped, staring hard at him. We two had roved the bush many times together and seen some terrifying things, but I never had seen this of which he spoke, nor even heard of it. The three who squatted there glanced at one another uneasily, and one of them dropped his cigaret as if it had lost its taste. He let it lie.

"Does the *coronel* know of this?" he asked.

"No," said Pedro, blowing a cloud of smoke. "We felt that it was as well to keep silent about the matter. I would not tell you of it now, but that I feel you should be on your guard against this thing when you go into that region. Say nothing of it to the others in your gang, Luis, until you are well on your way. If they knew of it sooner some of them might refuse to go."

"I refuse now," growled Luis. "I will take my chance against snakes or savages or beasts, but not against such an infernal thing as that——"

He stopped suddenly as he saw me standing there. Then he stood up in a dogged way.

"Lourenço, you have heard," he said. "I shall not go in your band of scouts. I have a wife and children to think of——"

"Then stay here and think of them," I interrupted. "I want no man who fears the bush. You, Antonio—and you, Meldo—what say you? Do you too fear to go?"

"I fear nothing which belongs in the bush," answered Antonio. "But a fiend is another matter. I am in doubt——"

"That is enough," I told him. "No man who fears even the horned devil himself can come on this journey. All three of you can report to the *coronel* for new assignments. Pedro, come with me."

I scowled at him as if displeased, though I secretly rejoiced that those men had quit before learning from the *coronel* that I did not want them. When we had left them behind us I asked in a scolding tone:

"Why tell such a wild tale and scare away my gang?"

"Most illustrious *capitao*," he explained with a mocking bow, "I was only trying to attach myself to your honored company. I have been put into the gang of Arnado Pestana, which means nothing more exciting than tapping and smoking. Luis is no man of the bush, and I thought he might like to trade places with me—if I scared him enough. Now that he and the other two have quit, perhaps you can persuade the *coronel* to shift me."

"You are shifted already," I said. "The *coronel* has changed the orders. He decided that Luis and the rest were too valuable to be sent out on a long trip, while you and I were such worthless rascals that we should never be missed if we were lost. He also said that we could go as far as we liked and he did not care if we never came back. I hope you feel as highly flattered as I do."

"We go alone?" he asked, his brown eyes glowing. "We two and no others?"

I nodded.

"Of course we are expected to find several million milreis worth of new rubber," I added. "Except for that, we have nothing to do."

"Nothing to do but risk our lives," he laughed. "And the whole Javary jungle to risk them in. *Por Deus!* What a holiday! Perhaps we may find something more interesting than rubber before we return, Lourenço. Who knows?"

"Perhaps we may," I echoed.

And we did.

II

SCOUTING for new rubber, *senhores*, is not so simple as it may seem to those who have not done it. You may think, perhaps, that since the only roads in our jungle are the streams, the best plan is to paddle along those streams until a rich rubber area is found, then explore that region and return to headquarters. And so it is a good plan—until all such places have been found. After that, men seeking new grounds must search the unknown bush. And of the scouts who go into the heart of the jungle on such hunts, those who come out usually are fewer than those who went in.

That is why, on a *seringal* so wide as that of our *coronel*, the search for new lands may be a grim venture. That is why the scouts

are sent, not singly, but in bodies of six or more men: the more men, the more chances that some of them will live to bring back the report of the expedition. Yet to my mind there is another side to this practise: the more men, the greater the chance of sickness or accident coming to one and thus slowing up the whole journey—for of course you can not abandon a sick or wounded comrade.

The weakness of one man has hampered many a band of jungle-rangers so seriously that the expedition failed and the men returned in desperate condition—those who did return. And that is why I opposed the *coronel's* plan to send a squad of ordinary tappers and smokers, and chose instead the one man whom I knew and trusted above all others: my brother bush-rover, Pedro.

We outfitted ourselves with four weeks' supplies of salt *pirarucu* fish, dried beef, rice, coffee and sugar; new repeating rifles and plenty of .44 bullets; and, of course, our *machetes* and *machadinhas*. Also we made sure that we had a three-foot roll of tobacco, some packets of *tauari* bark for cigaret papers, and rubber-wrapped matches. We calculated that when we should leave our canoe and make up our bark-strip packs for travel through the dense *sertao* they would weigh about seventy pounds each. And that weight, *senhores*, is quite enough for a man forcing his way through sticky mud and thick bush, swinging his machete at every step and carrying his rifle ready in the other hand.

Yet, when we had stowed all in the canoe, Pedro stood frowning down at the load as if dissatisfied.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "We have all we need, and it is packed so that it balances well."

He nodded doubtfully. Then he swung on his heel and went away. Soon he returned with a small jug.

"Rum and ginger," he said in answer to my look. "I do not know why, but I feel that we should carry it. More than once we have seen the time when a drink would have been worth more than gold."

He spoke truth. There are times when a little strong liquor is priceless. So, though I had been about to grumble that a jug was too clumsy to pack through the bush, I held my tongue. The jug went into the bow of the boat; and before we saw the headquarters again I was to be thankful that we had taken it.

We had started our packing while the early morning mist still hung heavy along the river, and even now the bright sun was not high. A cool little breeze played along the water, brilliant butterflies floated flashing along the banks, and from the jungle on both sides of the stream sounded the morning racket of monkeys and macaws and other bush life. A perfect day for paddling awaited us; and as we took our places in the dugout and faced the start of our long journey we breathed deep with the joy of being alive and looking ahead to weeks of action.

"*Adeos, amigos,*" Pedro called to the men standing on the edge of the bank above us. "Luis, if we meet that demon again we will cut off his hand and bring it back to you."

And he laughed.

Luis made no answer in words. He looked straight at Pedro for a moment, his face somber. Then he raised an arm, pointing up the river. Following the motion, we saw, swinging slowly in the air, high above the stream, a vulture.

A grunt ran among the other men as they too saw the evil bird.

"Death waits," one muttered.

"Death waits everywhere," Pedro scoffed. "So long as it does nothing but wait, I am satisfied."

But the faces of Luis and his mates remained sober. And suddenly one pointed, not at the death-bird in the sky, but at the water before us.

"Death crosses your bow before you have taken one stroke!" he cried. "See!"

From my place in the stern I saw nothing alarming. But Pedro, in the bow, muttered something, swung up his paddle, and struck hard. The edge of the paddle bit into the water with a vicious chunking splash. Then, stretching my neck, I glimpsed something writhing in a reddening welter of ripples.

A flat, triangular head—a whip-like neck—a squirming tail—the thing came contorting itself down past me. It was in two pieces, cut apart by the force of Pedro's blow; and the two pieces together had formed that deadliest of snakes—the *jararaca*.

Under the surface something made a rush. Glistening heads, snapping teeth, glaring eyes—the snake was gone, chopped

into fragments by blood-maddened *piranhas*. A few small ripples licked against the side of the canoe; the red stain disappeared; and Pedro laughed again.

"*Si*, Death crosses our bow," he jeered. "And you saw what happened to Death, did you not? Death or demons—let them come! Lourenço, are you ready? Let us leave these old women here to shake their heads and mutter. A long trail waits for our feet."

He surged at his paddle, and I at mine. Out into the river we swung, and up against the slow current we pushed our way. And as we rounded a turn and the headquarters clearing disappeared I glanced up again at the spot where the vulture had circled. It was not wheeling there now.

Instead, a black blot was moving away from us across the blue bowl of sky; flapping straight up the river ahead of us as if speeding away for some dread purpose. And in spite of Pedro's jeers and my own common sense, the croaking voice of the man behind us echoed in my ears—

"Death waits!"

III

SIX days we swung our paddles. Six nights we camped on hilltops or in little natural ports and slept without harm or alarm. No snake, no jaguar, no vampire, no other evil thing disturbed us by day or by dark, and the worst sound we heard was the hideous but harmless howling of *guariba* monkeys, to which we gave no attention.

On the seventh day we paddled until noon. Then, entering the mouth of a slow, narrow creek, we unloaded all our supplies on the shore, slid the canoe under the deep shadow of some giant ferns, and, after eating, began to make our packs. We had reached the point where we must take to our legs. East of us lay the unknown section through which we had decided to travel first.

"Our little holiday has ended," my comrade sighed, scanning the dense growth around us. "No more free and easy swinging of the paddle. From now on we work for every foot of ground."

"You have it right," I agreed. "And now how do you intend to carry that awkward jug of yours?"

"On your back," he grinned. "You surely did not think I intended to burden myself with it?"

"If you do not it will not go far," I retorted. "I might carry what is in it, but not the jug itself."

"No? Pardon me, illustrious *capitao*—I forgot you were the commander of this two-man gang. I forgot, too, that you are too old and feeble to carry much weight. Since you refuse I will pack it myself. But of course if I carry it myself I will drink it myself. That is only fair."

"I will carry it today," I decided, changing my mind. "Perhaps if I lighten it a little first I can endure its weight. You can pack it tomorrow."

"What a sudden change!" he mocked. "But I agree that it might be well to lighten it by a couple of mouthfuls."

And he drew the plug.

"Here is to ourselves and the *coronel*," I said, lifting the jug. "May we return to this spot safe and successful."

I took one mouthful, and no more. The fiery liquid stung my throat so that I coughed and wept. Gasping, I passed the jug to him.

"A good thought," he laughed. "And here is another which I once heard from a North American *senhor* at my old home in Santarem:

> "Here's to those who love us well!
> Those who don't can go to ——!"

"A beautiful sentiment," I agreed as he too lowered the jug and began to hiccough. "There are few who love us, but if the affection of those few is half as strong as this liquor we need no more friends."

He nodded, wiped his eyes, blew his nose, and looked reproachfully at the jug. Then he drove in the plug with a thump of his fist, set the vessel among his slabs of *pirarucu*, and began building his pack around it. When the pack was made and slung from his shoulders it balanced as well as if no jug at all were in it.

"That is the safest way to carry it—strapped in tight," he joked. "If it hung loose it might wriggle off and kick me from behind. Are we ready?"

Slinging my own pack and drawing my machete, I answered—

"Ready."

And we began cutting our way eastward.

For the rest of the day we worked on through the bush, keeping near the little

creek. Near night we halted at a good spot near the water, cleared away the usual space for a *tambo*, built a pole shed, roofed it with the great leaves of the *murumuru* palm, slung our hammocks, made a fire, and ate heartily. Then we sprawled in the hammocks, smoked, and listened awhile to the cracking noise of the tree-toads and the rest of the early night uproar.

Presently Pedro began to laugh.

"I suppose Luis and Antonio and the rest have destroyed us a dozen times before now," he said. "The great demon with the clutching hand has pulled us apart and scattered our bones all around the forest. 'Death waits!' they moaned. And here we lie comfortable and well fed, without having seen danger of any sort."

"Except that we nearly strangled over your pet jug."

"Ah, yes. But we have killed many a jug before now, old bushman, and—Hark!"

For minutes we hung silent, listening. The racket of the frogs and the howling of some far-off monkeys went on, but I heard nothing else. My comrade settled back.

"I heard a scream, or thought I did. Some beast has made a kill, perhaps."

Without reply, I kept on smoking and listening. He too kept quiet. Then suddenly we both sat up.

Faint and far away to the southward, a long thin cry sounded across the animal din—a cry which seemed the shrill yell of a man in torment and despair. As it died the forest uproar hushed, as if the wild creatures were listening and wondering like ourselves. For the time of three long breaths there was no sound. Then the night chorus began again. The voice which had made that cry was still.

We looked at each other and at the black night shadows beyond the fire-glow. Travel through the pathless bush had been hard by day; it would be almost impossible now.

"A man?" Pedro muttered doubtfully.

"I do not know. It is silent now."

More time dragged past, and no further sound came from the south. Pedro arose, and laid a small stick on the ground under his hammock, pointing toward the direction from which the cry had come. Then he lay down again.

"Probably some animal in distress," he said. "But tomorrow we might go southward and see whatever we may see. That cry could not carry far through bush as thick as this, and the place must be near."

"It may be farther off than you think," I disagreed. "The wind is from the south. But in the morning we shall see. There is nothing we can do now."

We said no more, and we heard no more. Soon we slept.

In the morning we shouldered our packs again, looked at Pedro's stick and at the jungle to which it pointed, and started to the south. And before long we found that my random guess had been near the truth: the sound had traveled farther than Pedro thought.

After cutting our way through matted undergrowth for some distance, we came out at water. Before us a long, weedy, winding *ygarapê* stretched away southward. How long it might be we could not tell; nor could we guess how far along it that cry had been borne on the night wind. We noticed, though, that it seemed to veer eastward. So, to avoid being turned away from our course, we took the right bank. And along this, chopping through thickets and jumping tiny streams and plowing heavily through sucking mud, we labored on for what seemed a long, long time.

Though we held a straight course, we never lost the *ygarapê*. It wound along like the *mai d'agoa* herself—that great serpent, the Mother of Water. Time and again we came out at the edge of the water, where we stopped to scan the other side and mop our streaming faces with our arms; then, seeing nothing strange, we went on through another belt of bush, watching all around us.

At length, pausing once more beside the water, we stood and stared. Over on the other low-lying bank a clay knoll swelled up and dropped again. On the crest of that hill a huge tree stood. And it stood alone. No other tree grew beside it, and under it was no bush. Grim, dingy, yellow-green, unwholesome, it rose like a tremendous poison-plant avoided by all other trees. And a poison-plant it was.

"*Assacu*," said Pedro. "The poison tree. Can you make out its evil spikes on the trunk?"

I could. And I made out something else—two rings of darker color around the bark; one about two feet from the ground, the other higher up.

"I never before saw an *assacu* with two stripes on its butt," I said.

"Nor I."

We stared thoughtfully at it. Then we looked up and down the *ygarapé*. We saw no way of crossing it. We knew it might wind on southward for miles before it ended, and even then its end might be an impassable lake or a vast swamp.

"I am going to look more closely at that tree," my partner said. "And there is only one sure way to reach it."

So we turned back. All the way to the spot where we had first found that *ygarapé* we worked, and then down the eastern shore. Noon passed, and still we toiled onward. The sun had swung well over to the west before we felt the soft ground beginning to grow firm and rise under our feet. And when we broke through the bush into the open at the base of that knoll we were so tired and hungry that it seemed we could go no farther that day.

Half blind with sweat, we gave only one glance at the tree before we dropped our heavy packs and sat down wearily on them. We had not yet grown hardened to pack travel, and my shoulders now ached cruelly and my breath came hard. Pedro too sat with head bowed and body slouching forward. For a little time we gave no attention to the strangely striped tree which we had worked so hard to see.

Then I caught a gasp from my partner. Lifting my head, I found him tense, staring at the tree. And as I peered at its butt and saw what he saw, my breath stopped.

Bolt upright against that venomous trunk, lashed tight to the cruel spikes by two bands of bark, stood the naked body of a man.

IV

FOR a dozen breaths we sat there as if frozen to our packs, watching that body whose yellowish skin blended with the yellow-green bark behind it. The drooping head, the dreadful stillness of the figure, showed beyond doubt that the man was dead. The bark bands showed that human fiends had bound him there. That much was plain. But the questions which jumped first to our minds found no answer—who he was, why he was there, and, more important still, who had put him there. And as we rose to go to him a thing happened which added to our perplexity.

The sun, rolling westward, struck down through an opening in the branches and lit up the body. At once a golden gleam flashed out from its naked breast. And as we mounted the hill that yellow radiance shone steadily into our eyes—the blaze of a gold cross dangling from the dead neck.

If Pedro had not looked down, that cross would have meant death to one or both of us. With our gaze fixed on it we should not have seen what lay before our feet. But something made my comrade drop his eyes an instant, and in that instant he swept an arm hard against my chest, stopping me with one foot in air. He leaped back, crowding me back with him; and in the same movement he dropped his gun hard.

"*Jararaca*!" he warned.

Held down by his rifle, a hideous shape lashed and squirmed. Pedro's machete flashed, and the deadly head flew off the creature. Picking up his gun, he crushed that head into the dirt with the butt. I slipped my own gun-muzzle under the body of the thing and snapped it writhing into the bush down below.

"Coiled before us in plain sight, and we almost walked on it," said Pedro. "Two steps more, and one of us would have talked with *Deus Padre* this night."

We stood searching every foot of ground. No other snake was in sight. But as our eyes roved along the earth we looked again on death. At the edge of the bush, down at our left, lay a jumble of bones.

Wordless, Pedro pointed his machete at them. I nodded. Then our eyes went back to the man who waited above, and on up the hill we went until we were within two spaces of him.

He was not tall, and his face was hidden from us by the droop of his head and the shaggy black hair hanging down over it—hair slightly streaked with gray, but not that of an old man. His body was lean but not gaunt, his shoulders were well muscled, and his skin to the waistline was darker than below. Yet his legs were not white. They too were dark, but with a different shade of darkness than that of the upper body. They seemed to have a bluish tinge. And they were swollen.

From head to foot, from foot to head and down again, we studied him. And our eyes rested longest on those puffed legs with their unwholesome color. Presently Pedro

stooped, peered sharply at the feet and ankles, and grunted as if he saw what he expected. Still stooping, he looked up into the down-turned face. His own face tightened.

I slipped my gun-butt flatwise under the dead chin and lifted it. Somehow I did not feel like touching it with my hand. And when I looked squarely into the face I was glad I had not put my own flesh on it. Not only was it drawn into lines of horror and agony, but it was blotched with terrible sores.

Great livid patches were eaten into the hollow cheeks as if by some poison. One eye was raw and blind. And the nose——

"Ugh!" I grunted.

And I dropped my rifle-butt and stepped back. The head flopped stiffly forward and hung as before.

Pedro arose, and he too stepped back. After glancing around us he laid down his gun, got out his rubber smoking-pouch, made two cigarets, and passed one to me. We stood and smoked a while before saying anything.

"Killed by snakes," he said at length, moving a thumb toward the distended and discolored legs. "Forced back against those poisonous *assacu* spikes, tied tight, and then struck again and again by snakes—probably *jararacas*. Before that—no one can say how long before—some one threw *assacu* poison in his face. I have seen such sores before."

I nodded, for I too had seen such things. The poison of the *assacu* not only is fatal if drunk, but if it is merely sprinkled on the skin it causes sores which can not be cured.

"He was a bush-traveler of some sort—perhaps like ourselves," he went on. "He is tanned to the waist, as we are, from going without a shirt. His muscles are those of a man who has paddled much. He is not more than forty-five years old, and he was strong and healthy not long ago. He died last night."

Again I nodded. That long despairing scream in the dark seemed to ring once more in my ears.

"But the big gold crucifix," I said. "What do you make of that?"

He made no answer until we finished our cigarets. Then he said:

"Nothing. I do not believe he was a priest. He has not the face of a priest, nor even of a man who would wear such a thing. I doubt if it was his at all."

"Whose, then? It must be worth much money, and it is not a thing to be left hanging on a naked murdered man."

He only shrugged his shoulders. Then he strode down the hill to the bones at the edge of the bush. I followed.

The bones were those of men. Among them were seven skulls.

I bent to scan them more closely, but at once I sprang back. Just beyond them, in thick grass, sounded a hiss.

For a few seconds we saw nothing of the snake hidden there. Then among the stalks I spied a flat head and a darting tongue. I lifted my rifle, but let it sink again and pulled my machete, which would make no noise to tell other men we were here. Balancing it carefully, I threw it, point downward.

Up flew a thrashing tail. A louder hiss sounded. The grass heaved and bent. We glimpsed the body of a six-foot *surucucu*, into whose coil my blade had plunged. Pedro slipped forward, swung his bush-knife in a half-circle, and clipped off its head. I stepped in and got back my own weapon.

Leaving the twitching, headless coil where it lay, we turned away from the bones and walked cautiously around the rest of the knoll. We found no more bones, no more snakes. But at the edge of the water, south of the tree, we found the marks of men. In the clay were the prints of three canoe bows and the trampled tracks of human feet.

That was all. Looking southward along the *ygarapé* we saw only that the water wound another turn and disappeared. So we turned back to the tree.

"This is not only a poison tree—it is a murder tree," I said. "Those bones down there never fell naturally into that place. Seven men have met a frightful death strapped to these spikes, and one by one they have been kicked away when the murderers came with another victim. This man here is the eighth. Perhaps if we were found here we might be the ninth and tenth."

"Not without sending a few men howling to —— ahead of us," he answered grimly. "And what is more, I have a great mind to send a few there anyway."

Looking at that mute body, I growled assent.

"Rubber-hunting will have to wait until

we have settled this matter," I said. "Now let us give this poor fellow a decent bed to lie in if we can. After that we shall see."

So we went back on our trail a little way, found the best spot we could, and labored there at a grave. When it was done we returned with a pole bed to the spike-studded tree of death and, working carefully, cut the murdered man free without scratching ourselves against the bark behind him. And a little later he lay straight and still in the hole we had made for him.

We stood looking down at his poor tortured face for a time before packing the earth upon him. And then Pedro knelt, lifted the head, and drew off over it the heavy gold cross and chain.

"Friend," he said soberly, "this will do you no good now. It may be that the cross will lead us to those who gave you so foul a fate. And if it does and the good God fights with us, I promise you that those who did this thing shall pay!"

V

BACK in the bush, well away from the *ygarapé* and that cursed tree, we made a poor camp. The ground was soggy and slimy, the only moving water we found was a stream less than a foot wide, and huge mosquitoes came by hundreds to attack us; but the day was so far gone that we must make some place to

sling our hammocks, and we were faint from hunger. So we did the best we could, knowing we could endure the place for one night and glad we were not near that snaky *assacu*.

Between our hammocks we hung the cross of gold. And when we had eaten and lain down we stared at it and puzzled about it.

"Only savages could have given that poor fellow such a death," Pedro declared. "Yet where would savages get such a cross? And why would they leave it on him? There are *barbaros* who do not know what the cross means; there are some who do not know the value of gold; but even such brutes would keep this fine cross as an ornament, if for nothing more."

"If it is not his own cross, and if it was not put on him by those who murdered him, I can see only one way for him to get it," I said. "And that way is almost impossible."

"And what is that?"

"That some man of the church reached him before us and left it there."

"No. That is not at all possible. No priest travels this lonely bush, and no priest hangs gold crosses on dead men. I never saw a priest who even owned so good a cross as this. How it came here we can not know—at least not yet. But we can be sure that the men who did this thing are brutes as cruel as the *jararaca*. And tomorrow, before we go on, I am going to prepare for them some of their own medicine."

"How?"

"Wait and see."

And no more would he tell me.

In the morning, while the coffee was boiling, he said:

"There are two ugly things I want: a small *jacaré*, about five or six feet long, and some snakes. I will hunt the snakes if you will find the alligator. Remember, no shooting! You must get him with the knife."

"Why waste time hunting such things?" I demanded.

"It is not a waste of time. When we have them I will show you."

So, knowing his habit of keeping his plans to himself until it pleased him to reveal them, and remembering more than one time when those plans had seemed foolish but had proved good, I went out that morning to kill an alligator.

On our way along the banks yesterday we had seen several of the brutes, and though it is not easy to kill a *jacaré* by the knife—for he is a tough, cunning, and wary beast—still it can be done. Out to the *ygarapé* I went, and there I crept stealthily along near the water, watching for a log-like form lurking in the weeds on shore.

It was a long hunt. Twice I found *jacarés* hidden in the rank growth, waiting for some animal to come from the jungle to drink; but both saw me too soon and clawed their way into the water. Two or three others were floating in the water itself, but these were beyond my reach. At length, when I had gone a long way from camp without success, I gave it up and started back. And I had nearly reached the place whence I started, when luck favored me.

Perhaps the creature was asleep. Perhaps he saw me but thought I did not see him—for, having nearly given up the search, I was walking along carelessly instead of sneaking on as before. At any rate, he lay motionless on the bank, and I was almost upon him before I spied him. Then, without an instant's pause, I attacked.

My machete was in my hand, and I dropped on the other hand and one knee and stabbed low and hard at his side. The blade sank into him nearly to the hilt. Instantly I jumped forward, straddled his back, grabbed his forelegs, and wrenched them up off the ground.

His struggle was short. He heaved, rolled, struck with his tail, tried to shove himself into the water. But the tail did not reach me, my weight and my grip on his forelegs kept him on land, and the long knife in his heart killed him.

When I was sure he was dead I released his legs, got up, and wiped my machete. He was a little longer than Pedro had asked, and heavy. But I rolled him over a few times until he was well away from the water's edge, and then returned to camp.

Pedro was in his hammock, chewing some beef. The sight made me hungry, and I took another strip of meat from our supplies and joined him. His mouth was so full and the meat so tough that at first he could not speak.

"Where is your *jacaré*?" he demanded after he got the chunk down his throat.

"In my hip pocket. Where are your snakes?"

"In my hat."

I laughed, thinking he had failed. But when we were through eating I found that he spoke truth. His hat lay in a corner of the little *tambo,* and, lifting it carefully, he brought it over and showed it to me. The crown was partly filled with earth, and on the earth lay the heads of eight *jararacas* and one *surucucu.*

"*Por Deus!*" I muttered. "This place must be alive with snakes."

"These were all I could find, but they will be enough," he said. "One *jararaca* head for each of the men who has died at that tree, and the *surucucu* for luck. Did you find a *jacaré?*"

"He awaits your pleasure back yonder."

"Good! Now we can get to work."

With his rifle in one hand and the hat dangling from the other, he followed me through the bush to the spot where the alligator lay.

"Good!" he repeated as he looked at the reptile. "Only one cut, and that one so small that we can easily hide it. Wait here until I come back. I must put this hat in a safe place."

So I squatted and smoked until he returned. Then he told me his plan. And after I thought it over I agreed that it was good, though I believed we could have done without the alligator.

We took the alligator to the tree. It was hard work, but the labor at the tree was harder. There, after mending the bark bands which we had cut yesterday in freeing the dead man, we hoisted the clumsy brute upright against the *assacu* thorns and managed to lash him firmly where the last victim had stood. And when this was done Pedro made a crude wooden cross with sticks and bush-cord and slung it over the reptile's neck.

Then he stepped to the bush and picked up his hat. Down the little hill he went to the spot where the canoes had left their marks. And from that point to the tree he laid a grim trail.

One by one, in little pockets scooped out with his machete, he buried those deadly snake-heads: buried them upside down, with the lower jaws cut away and the fangs pointing upward: covered them thinly with earth, so that they lurked just under the surface, a doom to the man whose bare feet trod on them. The largest and last head—that of the *surucucu*—he planted in front of the alligator.

Then he went to the water on the safe side of the hill, washed his hands, pounded his hat thoroughly on one knee, came back and made a cigaret. We stood as we had stood yesterday, smoking and looking up at the poison-tree. But different thoughts were in our minds.

"A dose of their own medicine," my partner said again. "Such fiends deserve nothing better. And no honest man ever will walk on that trap, for all men except these murderers avoid an *assacu* wherever found. Now let us look further and see what we can find."

Making sure that we had covered all signs of our visit here, we walked down to the edge of the bush. There we paused and looked back. All seemed the same, yet was not the same.

The monstrous *assacu* towered overhead, the ghastly bunch of bones lay at the edge of the bush, the bare dirt of the hill showed no new marks. But in place of a dead man and a gold cross now stood a dead alligator and a cross of wood. And from the water to the tree of poison led a trail of death.

VI

WITH the packs once more slung from our shoulders and machetes swinging at the bush-tangles, we left our camp behind us and worked to the shore below the hill of death. There we again started southward, determined to follow the *ygarapé* until we found its end or something to turn us from it.

For some time we slugged on through mud and thickets, finding no path, no footprints but those of birds or beasts. Beside us the water wound along in the same aimless way, now veering westward, now swinging back to the east. Except for the creeping rustle of unseen life, the constant buzz of mosquitoes, and the noises of our own progress, there was no sound. The stillness of the hot hours of afternoon was on the forest.

Our advance was slow—far slower than if we had been in our canoe—and the *ygarapé* seemed to have no end. Another night of camping in swamp land with nothing new to think about seemed to be approaching. But the sun was still a couple of hours above the western landline when the wandering water suddenly quit looping and began to go somewhere.

And at the same time the air brought to us a strange noise.

It swung to the east, that water, and broadened out into a good-sized *lagoa*. On a little point at the turn we stood amid shoulder-high grass and looked down its length. More than two miles of water lay open before us, and nowhere on it was any sign of men. But on the breeze, which blew straight from the east and stirred the surface into tiny waves, came the notes of an odd music.

Mellow, resonant, far away, those sounds rose and fell in a regular beat of four different tones: the notes of beaten wooden bars. Over and over they hammered in the same order—as if the music were trying to say something. Then they stopped as if waiting.

After a pause they started again in just the same way as before. But this time they ended differently: the last note was beaten repeatedly and rapidly. It sounded like a demand for an answer.

And the answer came. Nearer to us, louder and deeper, out boomed a reply from the same kind of wooden bars. Only two notes were in this message—if it was a message—one high and one low, following each other slowly and regularly until each had been struck half a dozen times.

At once the far-off sounds started anew. This time they came in a regular order, and the series was not repeated as before. And in spite of their mellowness they did not make music. They thumped through the air like words of something talking, telling some news to the other thing nearer to the place where we stood.

When they grew silent, that other thing again replied: a few deep, curt notes like an order. That was all.

Though we listened hard for further talk between those wooden tongues, none came. And though we watched the lagoon for canoes, we saw none. As before, the water was empty and the air still. Yet we knew that somewhere east of us men had talked across miles of distance, and that the deep-toned messages had started at a place not more than two or three long gunshots from the place where we stood.

We unslung our packs and squatted beside them in the tall grass, hidden from any eye which might watch from the east.

"Cannibals?" Pedro suggested, rubbing a shoulder worn tender by a pack-thong.

"Perhaps. You are thinking of that light-skinned tribe of Javary *barbaros* who send messages by beating wood?"

He nodded.

"I have heard sounds go through the air which were much like what we have just heard," he said. "That was when I was working on the western edge of the *coronel's seringal*, two years ago, in the gang of Alves Feijo. The noises were very faint, and we never saw any Indians while we worked there, so I believed the sounds were made by birds. But old Nabuco Magalhaes, who worked in our gang, vowed they were messages beaten out on wood by those eaters of men."

"Nabuco was right," I told him. "Those cannibals do send messages in that way. I have been among them and heard the messages sent, but they never allowed me to see how it was done. But that was very far from here, and I do not believe any of those people live in this place."

"Perhaps they have moved here."

"No. Their country is far better than this—a land of hills, above the floods; and they never would leave it for this swamp-hole. What is more, I doubt if these men here are cannibals. If they were they would not lash a man to the *assacu* tree—they could find a better use for him."

"True."

After a few minutes of listening and thinking I added:

"We shall learn nothing by squatting here. I doubt if we shall learn much more today anywhere, for night is not far off. Our wisest plan is to make a secret camp and then scout without these infernal packs to hinder us."

"For once you have spoken sense, *capitao*," he smiled. "Let us find a sleeping-place."

So we lifted the packs once more and, stooping to keep below the grass-tops, left the little point. Back into the bush we went until we found a spot that would do for the night. Quickly we made camp. Then, leaving everything behind except our weapons, we struck off to the south-east, working on a slant toward the long *lagoa*.

Once more on the northern shore of that water, we stood behind trees and again looked along its rippling length. Pedro grunted.

"Aha! Now this dead water shows life!"

Far down the lagoon, almost at the end, four dark spots slowly grew larger. From them flashed little glints of light—the gleam of wet paddle-blades. Straight into the eye of the sun they came, heading directly for us. Behind our protecting trees we waited and watched.

The spots became bows topped by swaying shoulders and heads. On they came, and on, until we made out the naked copper bodies of the head paddlers. Then suddenly they swerved toward the northern bank and lengthened out into low-riding dugouts, each carrying six or more men. Bunched so closely that they seemed to blend into one boat, they surged straight at the shore; and, without slowing their speed, they slid into it and were gone.

"This *lagoa* must have an *enseada* on this side," Pedro muttered.

We left our trees and, working stealthily, passed along through the undergrowth until we reached water again. As my partner had guessed, an *enseada*, or bay, opened there in the bank. But it was empty. The canoes had disappeared.

The water curved eastward, and we knew the paddlers had gone around a turn. We knew, too, that the end of the bay was not far off; for beyond the turn the line of tree-tops rose high at one place, showing that under it must be a hill perhaps a hundred feet tall. There, we judged, should be an Indian settlement. A moment later we were sure of it. Out broke a sudden thunder of drums.

"A war party!" said Pedro, his mouth close to my ear. "Those canoes have been on a raid. And did you notice that one of the men in the first boat was hunched over as if wounded or a prisoner?"

I nodded. We moved on.

Keeping within the cover of the bush but near the edge, where we could see without being seen, we slipped on around the turn. Then beyond us we viewed the hill, rising steep-faced from the water, and at one side of it a number of canoes. But no men were in sight. All were up on the hill where the log drums boomed in triumph. And as fast as we could go without betraying ourselves we hastened to reach and climb that hill. We knew that up there something important was taking place, and that now, while it was going on, was the best time for us to spy without being caught.

Unexpectedly we found ourselves in a path. It came from the forest, turned sharply, and led on toward the hill. It showed signs of much use, but it was empty now. Along it we stole swiftly until we reached the base of the hill.

The hill was steep of side as well as of front, and almost bare of the undergrowth which had concealed us thus far. The many small stubs in the ground showed that the bush had been cleared away by the inhabitants of the place, perhaps to lessen the chances of any attack. But the big trees still stood, and by crawling upward from one to another of these we reached the upper edge unseen. And there, lying close to the ground and peering out from behind the same butt, we saw and heard.

Before the small doorway of a long, low house, which stretched back I know not how far among the trees, stood two closely packed crowds of Indians. Hard-faced, muscular, naked except for small loin-mats, all painted with wavy stripes of red, and some armed with clubs, bows, or spears, they were fighting-men every one.

Half of them stood with backs to the house, the rest facing toward it. In the space between these gangs, watched by all, were two things on which our gaze also fixed: a motionless, confused heap on the ground, and a man standing with hands tied behind him.

The prisoner was white.

VII

A LEAN, bronzed man of medium height, with bushy blond hair and beard, and face hard-set; shirt ripped and mud-stained; breeches tight below the knee and also smeared with clay; boots laced to the knee—these were the things I noticed first. Then, looking him over once more, I saw that his light hair was stained with blood; that an empty cartridge-belt was around his hips; that from it hung a long holster, also empty; and that though he showed all the signs of a fierce fight, and though he now was a lone prisoner among scores of savages, he seemed to be not afraid but nearly bursting with rage.

My eye dropped to the heap on the earth near him. I saw a pair of copper-colored legs and a bare arm sticking out of the pile, which was still with the stillness of death.

Several dead savages, I thought. For an instant I wondered that even such hard-looking men as these should dump their dead in a pile like so much dirt. But then I thought no more of it, for a new thing took my attention.

The drums, somewhere out of sight beyond the crowd, stopped. The men before the door drew aside, leaving the way clear. And out from the house, moving with a smooth glide that reminded me of a snake, came a man who evidently was the chief.

Taller than the bound prisoner by half a head, he seemed higher still because of the lofty crown of brilliant long feathers which rose from his brow. He was painted like his men, as naked as they, and beardless like the rest; but otherwise he was no more like them than the lightning is like the thunder-clouds. Among their solid bodies he looked slender as a boy. Where their faces were broad and low his was long and thin. And that was not all. Every man of his warriors was copper-brown—but his sleek skin was white.

A white man with a black soul: that was my thought as I looked on him. Yes, a white man with the heart of a snake—and almost the body of a snake, too. That creeping glide of his—that slender, supple figure—and his eyes! As he stopped before the other white man and the sunlight fell on his face I saw that those eyes were as beady and venomous as if he were in truth a snake on legs. And the sneering smile he gave the prisoner was as deadly as the swift baring of a serpent's fangs.

The prisoner himself seemed to lose his tongue as he stared back at that white-skinned chief. For several breaths the two faced each other eye to eye, the men around them still as the trees. Then the blond man spoke.

"You the chief of these gory wolves?"

"*Si, señor.*"

The snake-man's voice was a hiss.

"Spaniard, eh?" growled the other. "Might have known it, you dirty renegade! If there's anything lower, viler, or meaner than a Spaniard that's been kicked out by his own people and gone native I never yet saw it."

I looked to see the snake-faced chief strike him down for that. But he made no move. The cruel smile widened a little. In sneering Spanish his hissing voice sounded again.

"The *señor* is displeased about something?"

The blond man gulped.

"Speak English?" he snapped.

"*Si, señor, hablo inglés.*"

"Then speak it, —— you! And hear me speak it, —— you! You lousy, stinking, yellow-bellied son of two dogs, you sent these brutes of yours to wipe out my men, didn't you? And not only to kill them but to chop them up and bring them here to you, you filthy cannibal! Look at them!"

Still smiling that deadly smile, the feather-crowned man looked coolly down at the still heap on the dirt.

"The *señor* has it right. The men are cut even as he says. Perhaps the *señor* would like to say farewell to one of his friends?"

Swiftly he bent and lifted something from the pile. My breath stopped. The thing he had raised, *senhores*, was the bloody arm of a man, chopped off at the shoulder.

And before the prisoner could dodge or even guess his intention, that snaky fiend slapped him on the face with the dead hand on the end of that arm.

A choking yell broke from the blond man. Straining at the cords binding his wrists, he sprang at the grinning chief. He butted at him with his head, kicked at him, even tried to reach him with his teeth. But the snaky one moved about with the same smooth speed, avoiding all his attack and laughing in his face. Finally the red-eyed captive, unable to reach him, stood still and cursed him.

He cursed that chief with bitter, burning words until his voice failed. Then he stood panting, his face still working. And the chief grinned on.

"*Si*, the *señor* is displeased," he mocked. "It is very sad. But the *señor* does me wrong when he calls me cannibal. I do not eat the flesh of men, for I do not like its taste. But my brothers here are fond of feasting on their enemies, and I am too soft of heart to deny them."

"Enemies!" the other rasped. "Those men of mine were not enemies to any one. They were quiet, good-hearted fellows who came with me by the government's order. And I tell you you will pay for this! I am on government work, and when the government knows of this it will hunt you to your death—you and every brute in your gang!"

The chief laughed again in his hissing way.

"The *señor* forgets that the government may not hear. It is a true saying, is it not, that dead men carry no tales? My *capitán* reports that all your party were made unable to carry tales—all but you, who were kept alive by my order. And it may be, *señor*, that you also will lose the power to speak of this matter. *Quien sabe?*"

The blond man glared but said nothing. The chief went on:

"I have not heard what the *señor* does for the government. Perhaps the *señor* does not speak truth. What work of the government could be done so far from the home of the government?"

"Work that your ignorant brain would never comprehend, you son of a snake. Work of knowledge. I am commissioned by the government of Brazil to explore this region with especial reference to its resources, topography, and ethnology. By the government, understand? Behind me is the government's army. And if I don't come out the government will send in a force to learn why. And as sure as there's a God in the skies you will pay! Yes, you'll pay!"

"*Si?* The government of Brazil is nothing to me, nor is any other. I am my own government. But it seems that I am something to the Brazilian government, or you would not know me by name."

His head lifted and his chest swelled as he continued:

"As the *señor* says, I am the Son of the Snake. Among my own men I am known as the Jararaca."

The captive stared. Then he laughed scornfully.

"Don't flatter yourself that you're anybody. I never heard of you, you bit of scum. When I called you 'son of a snake' I called you what you are, that's all—a dirty crawling thing too vile to live among men. 'Jararaca' is right!"

For the first time the chief scowled. Yet he spoke as softly as ever.

"It is unlucky that the *señor*, who is so wise and important, has not heard of the Son of the Snake. It is still more unfortunate that he speaks so harshly. And the *señor* spoke of God. He believes in the cross?"

"I'm no Catholic, if that's what you mean."

"Ah. But a Protestant, then? The *señor* believes in his 'God in the skies?' "

"Certainly. And in a hell for you, you yellow murderer. You—you——"

Again, with his eyes on the heap of butchered arms and legs before him, he burst into savage cursing of the Jararaca chief and all his men. And again the Jararaca listened as if amused. When the explorer stopped he said:

"The *señor* has the gift of tongues, is it not so? Perhaps this 'God in the skies' speaks through his mouth, yes? And perhaps the *señor* would like to leave this place and think about his God—even see him, it is possible. There is a quiet place not far from here where a fine gold cross hangs for those who believe in it, and where you may think all night undisturbed—except perhaps by a snake or two. I will send the *señor* there, and then he will not be offended by a little feast which my men will enjoy tonight.

"But while you are alone, *señor*, think about this word which I give you:

"Who lives by the cross dies by the snake."

For a moment longer the two fronted each other, the chief grinning, the prisoner scowling and trying to read his words. Then with a sudden wild screech the Jararaca leaped at the bound man.

Clawing, biting, attacking like a mad jungle beast, he knocked the prisoner down and fell on him. The blond man fought back in fury. Though his hands were useless, he did such damage with feet and teeth that soon the Son of the Snake squirmed away and stood up again.

I cocked my gun.

But Pedro, hearing the click, whispered fiercely:

"Wait! No shooting yet!"

I hesitated, burning to kill that chief where he stood. If he had attacked the captive again I probably would have shot—and I probably would not be here now. But I saved that bullet for another day. The Jararaca did not touch the man again.

His black eyes glittering, he laughed, the hiss in his voice louder than before. Then, turning toward the long house, he spoke two words to his men: two words in the Tupi *lengoa geral* which started us to creeping swiftly away down the hillside—

"*Boi euirah.* Snake tree."

VIII

IF THE gang of the Jararaca had not been intent on what was going on before them we might not have escaped unseen; for we went downhill too fast for good concealment. The little stubs jutting from the ground caught our clothes when we crawled, and stubbed our toes when we arose and flitted from tree to tree; and the trees themselves were not close enough together to hide us well from any one at the top. But no yell of discovery sounded behind us, and soon we were hidden once more in the bush.

There we started back as we had come, hugging the shore. Neither of us spoke, but the same purpose was in our minds—to reach the *assacu* tree before the savages arrived there with their captive.

Half-way around the curve of the *enseada* we paused and peered across the water at the hill. Savages now were at the spot where the canoes lay, and among their ugly faces we made out the lighter skin and blond hair of the prisoner. Men shoved him roughly into a canoe, but no one entered the boat with him. Instead there seemed to be some argument among the warriors, and for the time all hung back.

"None of them wants to go now to the snake tree," Pedro guessed. "All want to stay here and prepare for the feast of man-flesh. So much the better for us—probably only a few will come with the white man. Let us hasten."

On we went until a thought struck me. I halted so suddenly that Pedro nearly knocked me down.

"Let us cut through to the *ygarapé* instead of following the shore," I urged. "It is shorter."

"No! By going the long way we make better speed—we follow the trail we have cut. And I want my *machadinha*."

I had not thought of the hatchet as a weapon, but now I agreed quickly. Those light, keen, silent *machadinhas* of ours might easily put two savages out of the fight. During the recent months of the great flood we had whiled away more than one idle hour by throwing them at marks, and had become so skilful at it that either of us could hit a man's head if we tried. Now was the time to try.

So we pressed on toward our camp, where the *machadinhas* lay with our packs. Now that we were far enough from the hill we ceased caring whether we shook the bushes, and dropped all attempts to move slyly. At top speed we raced over our back track until we stumbled panting into our *tambo*.

A swift search of our packs, and we were off again, the hatchets in our belts. And from that time on it was a steady, hard run along that never-ending *ygarapé*, fearing every minute that we should hear the drive of paddles and the swash of canoes overtaking and passing us. We wanted to save that man without shooting, for gunshots would bring the whole tribe of murderers out to hunt us down. But if the canoes caught up with us we must shoot.

At last, however, we burst gasping out upon the bare ground of the knoll of the *assacu*. Halting, we held our breath and listened until our straining lungs got the better of us. No sound came from the water behind. And you may be sure we did not creep to the edge to look back. Our feet were bare, and we were not sure we knew just where each of those nine buried snake-heads waited with upturned fangs.

"The American wears boots," said Pedro, his eyes roving up that bare ground.

"Yes. The fangs of snakes—alive or dead—are nothing to him."

"We had best go around to the other side. It is safe there, except that one spot before the *jacaré*."

Passing close to the bush, yet far enough from it to dodge any lurking snake, we strode around past the bones and on until we looked up at the alligator strapped against the poison-thorns. Then, after poking our guns into the undergrowth and making sure that nothing was coiled at that place, we stepped in and crouched out of sight.

"The day ends," said Pedro.

It was so. The sun was fast rolling down. Against its glare the great tree loomed black as a nightmare growth, towering over us like an awful giant about to step on us and crush us into nothing. Back in the jungle the dismal roar of a *guariba* broke out, and from thousands of throats the hammering of frogs swelled into the beginning of the night chorus. Less than a quarter-hour of daylight remained. I began to fear that night would find us still waiting.

Then, so near that I started, grunting voices sounded and water swashed. The *barbaros* had come.

We heard no bump of canoes against the

bank, but we did hear snarling voices and the smack of a blow on flesh. The blow was answered by an angry curse in English. Then up over the crest of the knoll rose a blond head, followed close by other heads greasy-haired and brutal-faced.

The low sun struck across the face of the white man, and we saw that he recognized the *assacu* as a poison-tree and suspected that it meant death to him. He came straight on without a falter in his step, but his mouth was set grimly and his eyes darted this way and that as if he sought some line of escape. But then the two foremost savages closed in and gripped his arms, one on each side, to prevent any sudden break.

As they did this, one of them started slightly and jerked a foot upward as if something had stung it. He looked over his shoulder at the ground, but saw nothing. So he came on.

Another *barbaro* did the same thing. A third, though he did not jump like the other two, stopped a moment, leaned on a spear, lifted a foot, glanced at it, rubbed it with one finger as if something had hurt him, then resumed his stride.

By that time the first pair, clutching the captive, rounded the butt of the tree and saw what was bound there. They stopped short and stared. The others, following, pressed around them and also halted. Swiftly I counted them. Seven Indians and one white. And no more were coming.

A sudden grunting started among them. The sight of that beast of the mud with its crude cross, where they had expected the corpse of a man weighted down with a crucifix of gold, had astounded them so that they could not think. Even the white man stood motionless, staring like the rest, and perhaps wondering what it all meant. And we stayed where we were, making no move; for we knew that death already was creeping upward along the veins of three of them, and we wanted it to creep as far as it could before we made our presence known.

Then a fourth, moving closer to the *jacaré*, grunted sharply and drew up a foot. The buried head of the *surucucu* also had gotten its man.

But the man did not know it. He peered down at the ground, moved over a little, and turned toward the prisoner. The others remembered what they had come for. They too looked toward the white man and spoke growlingly among themselves. At the same moment the white made a desperate break for life.

With a heaving, twisting plunge he wrenched himself away from one of the men holding him and knocked the other staggering. In the same movement he whirled, bent low, and threw himself head-first at the two *barbaros* behind him. So swift and hard was his charge that he broke through between them and was clear of them before they could grasp him. And when he had passed them no man was in his way.

Straight for the bush he dashed—straight toward the spot where we crouched. Snarling, the nearest savages jumped after him. But in the next instant two of them died. We hurled our *machadinhas*.

In the last rays of the sun those hatchets whirled from our hands like streaks of lightning. And as if stricken down by thunderbolts, those two Indians plunged forward and down on their faces, our steel buried in their brains. Instantly we were out of the bush, charging with our machetes.

As we left the tangle the prisoner crashed headlong into it. Two more cannibals, leaping downhill after him, tried to stop themselves at sight of us, but could not. Slipping on the clay, they slid into our down-chopping blades.

I struck my man so fiercely that I too went down. The keen weapon, cutting into him at the base of the neck, sank into the chest-bones and stuck there as firmly as if driven into wood. As he fell, the downward yank of the fixed machete threw me off balance, and I tumbled on his body.

I was up in a second, straining to free the knife and watching the three remaining *barbaros*. If they had attacked me then they surely would have killed me. But they did not attack.

They had not come far from the tree, and they stood staring as if dazed. Not until I had put a foot on the dead man under me and worked the blade loose did one of them move. And his movement was clumsy—a sluggish sort of step like that of a man numb or sick. The other two did not move at all.

Then Pedro, standing beside me with red machete ready to meet any rush, spoke in Tupi.

"You are dead men. Even though we touch you not, death crawls through you. You are struck by the snake which is under the earth. Its bite is in your feet."

Silent they stood. In their faces grew

fear. And every one of them looked suddenly back at the way they had come from the water, then down at his feet.

The sun dropped and was gone. Swift night deepened under the great *assacu*. The dead Indians on the ground, the three above still living but dying, blurred into dim shadows. The growing noise of the jungle swelled into a hammering, cracking, screaming roar of life.

"*Senhor! Norte Americano!*" shouted Pedro.

"Here!" came the answer from the bush behind us. And the white man strode out beside me.

Quickly I felt down his arms, found the thick bush-rope binding them, and cut it.

"Get to the canoes!" I ordered. "Shove them out. Work down the shore and wait for us. Hurry!"

Without a word he strode away through the dark.

"Get the rifles!" I told Pedro.

With the words I followed the American, watching for any sign of a rush by those three above us. I went only as far as I thought the ground safe, and there I stood on guard. But no rush came. Straining my eyes, I made out that two of the three Indians had sunk down on the ground, where they sat hunched over with heads hanging. The third still stood bolt upright staring down at his legs.

"All right, you men!" came the blond man's call from the *ygarapé*.

Down the hill I stole to the bones, whose white glimmer showed faint at the bush-line. There Pedro stood with the guns. Silently we worked along until we felt we were at the right point, when we began groping our way southward. And no man followed.

IX

FOR some distance we labored along the shore, advancing more by instinct and touch than by the use of our eyes. Then we halted and listened.

Only the night din came to our ears, and if any of the doomed three was trying to follow us we could not hear him. But we were sure they had not left the knoll. Not only were their hopeless attitudes those of men convinced they were about to die, but the loss of their boats would go far toward keeping them there. With their canoes they might have reached the Jararaca with their tale before they died, but to traverse the black, pathless jungle was another matter.

So we called to the blond man. From the gloomy water came an answering hail. A blurred shape glided into sight, and after one or two more calls to show where we were it floated within reach. We entered the canoe, found paddles, and shoved out and away from the shore tangle.

"Was there only one canoe?" I asked.

"That's all," the American answered. "Nobody wanted to come on this trip. Only one boatload did come, and they were ugly about it. Growled all the way over."

I said no more. Pedro and I began paddling quietly along the *ygarapé*. The American took a few strokes, but soon stopped.

"Guess I'll let you boys do the paddling," he said. "My hands are bad. That rope damaged my wrists some."

Not another word was spoken until we reached the point where that afternoon we had heard the talking wood. There we landed and argued briefly about hiding the canoe. But it was a long craft—made for eight men—and too big to be easily concealed. So we decided merely to lift its bow on shore and leave it there for the time.

"We shall need it again at dawn," Pedro said. "I am going back to the *assacu* then and get our *machadinhas*. They are too good to be left to rust in the brains of *barbaros*. And we need them in our work."

The American still said nothing, standing quiet while we talked. And when we entered the bush and started for our camp he trailed us closely but silently. Not until we were in our *tambo* did he speak, and then it was in answer to a question.

"*Senhor*," I said, "you have been through a bad experience. Will you have a little drink of rum?"

"I sure will!" was his instant response. "Now that things have quieted down I feel a little off color. Got a nasty rap on the head before I was captured."

I felt about until I found the jug, and when its plug was out I put it into his hands. A gurgle followed, and then a cough.

"Woof!" he sputtered. "Boy, oh boy! This is pure essence of —— fire! Got a recoil like a six-inch gun, I'll bet."

"In about two minutes you will know you have had a drink, *senhor*," Pedro laughed. "Could you eat something too?"

"Nope. Not just yet. Later, maybe, when my nerves loosen up. But I could smoke, if I had anything that would burn."

"You shall have it," I promised, taking back the jug and swallowing a mouthful from it, then passing it to Pedro.

When I stopped coughing I made two cigarets, one for the stranger and one for myself, and held the match. He gave me a swift, straight look in the eyes as the light held, and when Pedro lit a smoke of his own he studied my partner, in the same rapid way. Then we sat down in the hammocks.

"We sleep with no fire tonight," I said. "but a cigaret or two will do no harm. It is time we became acquainted. I am Lourenço Moraes and this is my comrade Pedro Andrada—*seringueiros* of Coronel Nunes of the Javary, now scouting for new rubber. We are in this spot because two nights ago we heard a scream from the south and came this way to learn what made it. And then, having learned that, we kept on to find who was responsible. Now we know."

"That yellow snake who calls himself Jararaca?"

"The Jararaca. The man who told you that 'who lives by the cross dies by the snake.'"

His cigaret hung motionless a moment. Then he asked—

"How do you know he said that?"

"Because we were there, hidden behind a tree and spying. If we had not been there——"

"I would not be here," he finished. "I get you. And I hope I don't have to tell you chaps how eternally grateful I am for——"

"Say no more of that," Pedro cut in.

"All right. Just as you say. But I want to add that though I've seen some beautiful sights now and then, I never saw anything half as glorious as you two fellows rising up out of the bush and heaving tomahawks into those scuts behind me. Believe me, that's something that will stay with me until I reach the end of the long trail.

"It takes out a little of the rankle of seeing my men butchered for a cannibal holiday, too—a little, though not much. I'm going to do some slaughtering on my own hook before the score is even. And unless something bad happens to me right soon, that Jararaca is going to squirm around and bite himself for bucking up against Tom Mack.

"That's me. Thomas Gordon Mack of the U. S. A. Sort of a foot-loose cuss with some scientific knowledge and a constant urge to ramble into unknown places. I'm known to the Brazilian government, and while I was hanging around Rio a while ago and wondering what to do next they offered me a job nosing around this end of the country and looking things over, after which I'm supposed to write a weighty report of everything seen and done. So here I am.

"They'd have given me a young army, and maybe a brass band and a uniform, but that isn't my way of doing things. A few good men—the fewer the better—are what you want for bush work. And the boys I picked out were just built for the job. All *caboclos* except Joao, my *tenente*, who was a *mameluco*. Born bushmen. Good boys. Not a drop of yellow in the whole outfit. And now they're roasting on the hill over yonder to feed that nest of snakes.

He slammed his cigaret savagely down on the dirt.

"I was off in a canoe with one of the boys when it happened," he went on. "Heard shots and yells. Beat it back as fast as we could paddle. By the time I got there it was about over. The boys never had a chance. Surrounded, jumped, butchered.

"I got some of the raiders before my gun was empty. Then they got me. Must have thrown a club. The light went out, and I woke up disarmed and tied.

"By that time they had set up some sort of arrangement of slats, and one of them who looked more brainy than the rest was pounding out some message on it. Sounded like a big xylophone. After a while an answer came back, and when another message had gone and a reply came they took the thing down and threw me into a canoe. Guess they must have been telling their boss they had a live white man and wanted to know whether to chop me up or bring me in all in one piece.

"The rest of the boys they cut up—took their arms and legs— Ugh! But they'll pay, by Judas! They'll pay!"

"What will you do now, Senhor Mack?" asked Pedro. "Have the government send in an army, as you threatened?"

"Government? ——, no! Governments are too slow, all of them. This is my own war. I'm going to get that Jararaca and get him good. Don't know just how; but I'm camping on his trail until one of us

cashes in. You fellows haven't a gun to spare, have you?"

We hesitated. Then I said:

"We have no extra gun, *senhor*, and we do not like to part with our own."

"Of course. I wouldn't do it myself. Well, I'll dope out some way to get that bird or I'm not Tom Mack. And I'll clean up as many more as I can. Say, that rum of yours sure has a punch. Awhile ago my tongue was stuck at both ends, and now I can't stop it. Can you spare another smoke?"

With a new cigaret between his lips he was quiet a moment. Then he said:

"I hope you cleaned up those other three Indians after I boarded the canoe."

"They are dead by now," I judged.

"Huh? You left them alive?"

"Alive but not alive. There are some things you have not heard."

And I told him of the man whose body we had found and of the trap we had made.

"Ha! Good stuff!" he approved. "Turn about is fair play. And that alligator idea of yours helped me a lot in breaking loose, Pedro. But are you sure those three you left there all had stepped on snakes?"

"Quite, sure, *senhor*. Every one of them looked back when I told them they were snake-bitten, and I saw they thought of the stings they had felt as they came up."

"Uh-huh. We'll make sure in the morning. But now listen here; while we have a canoe I want to use it to get back to my camp tonight. Those mutts wrecked things pretty well, but I'm quite sure I can salvage some of my stuff, and I want all there is left. There'll be a moon tonight, probably in about an hour—enough light to get around with. If you chaps care to go with me——"

"Certainly, *senhor*," we said.

"Good! Let's start now. We can work down the lake all right in the dark and be so much nearer camp by moonrise. Say, do you mind if I waste a little rum on my wrists? They're cut up pretty bad, and the bush-rope they used on me may have been poisonous. If you'll just sop a little into the cuts I'll be much obliged."

While Pedro held matches I did as he asked. His jaws clicked together as the fiery liquor bit into the raw flesh, but he gave no other sound. When I corked the jug he spoke one word through his teeth.

"Thanks!"

Then we struck out through the bush to the point. The canoe lay as we had left it. I crawled into the stern, Mack took a place in the middle, and Pedro shoved the long boat out and jumped in over the bow. A moment later we were sliding quietly eastward on a lake of ink.

X

AN EIGHT-MAN *ubá*, or war-canoe, is a clumsy craft for three men to handle, and in darkness, on unknown waters where snags may lurk and noise may mean death, no speed can be made in such a boat. We three did not try to hasten on our way. We only crept along, our eyes and ears wide open and our paddles dipping silently, with rifles beside us ready for instant use. At any moment we might meet other canoes bound for the poison-tree to learn why this one did not return.

But we met none. Time after time we halted our paddles and reached swiftly for our guns as some splash or swashing sound came suddenly to us; but each time, after listening and peering around, we decided that the noise was made by alligator or fish, and began our quiet strokes again. And so, working, pausing, drifting, we journeyed on past the entrance of the bay at whose end lay the cannibal camp.

There we saw the glow of firelight shining in the black mass of jungle, though the fires which made it were out of our sight. Through the night noise also came the throb of drums beating at that place, and once we heard the voices of men yelling in savage celebration. At the thought of what was going on beside those fires I shut my teeth, and up ahead the blond man growled fierce curses. We put more power into our paddling than was wise, and slowed again only when the shouts and the light had died out behind us. Then we felt our way onward as before.

Moonrise found us rounding the turn at the far end of the lagoon. The first light dropping from the sky was very faint, but by it we could see the water ahead more clearly, and for the time that was enough. Here the broad water narrowed again into another winding *ygarapé*, along which we journeyed with fair speed but the same silence. The jungle noise had quieted somewhat, and the loudest sound we heard was

the roar of some bad-tempered jaguar prowling the bush not far off. Nowhere was any sound of human life.

After a time the looping water widened once more, and now the light of the rising moon fell fair on it from our left.

Seeing nothing on the glittering surface, we put our shoulders into our strokes and surged along at far better speed. Before long Senhor Mack told us to swing in toward the right-hand shore. And after coasting along the edge of the jungle for a little way we turned into a small cove and found several small canoes floating at a landing.

On the sloping shore above was a clearing. In the clearing a big *tambo* stood out in the moonlight. As we stepped ashore and climbed into the open space beside that *tambo* we found only death and that life which preys on death.

Two big alligators crawled toward the water, opening their fearful jaws at us in menace and disappointment as they went. They had come too late, for the black birds of the sky had dropped on that spot long before they arrived. Now there remained only raw bones and skulls.

Senhor Mack made a choking sound as he looked down on those things which a few hours ago had been his men. And I too, though I had seen fleshless bodies more than once during my years in the Javary jungle, felt hot hate of the Jararaca and his crew boil up in my brain as I saw that no arm or leg bones were among those scattered remnants. Pedro, gazing about him, growled in his throat.

"Good-by, boys," the blond man said hoarsely. "You went out like men. And you went out quick—thank God for that! A —— sight quicker than that yellow devil will go if I get him as I want him!"

He choked again and turned into the *tambo*. We stood silent and waited.

We saw him go slowly about inside the place, stooping now and then to pick up something, then dropping it. By and by he came out, bringing only a rolled-up hammock.

"Cleaned!" he said. "They carried away or ruined everything. Not a gun, knife, or cartridge left. Not a bite of grub. Even this hammock is cut, but it can be mended. Not another thing here worth taking. But I'm betting they missed my cache."

Tossing the hammock toward the landing, he walked to a tree at the edge of the open space. It looked as solid and firm as any other tree. But he stopped in the shadow beside it, put both hands on it, and pulled a large piece of bark away. Then his head and shoulders disappeared into the trunk.

Crossing to where he stood, we saw that in the tree yawned a large black hole. In this he was groping downward. Soon he straightened up and drew out a package wrapped in rubber-cloth.

"Hollow," he explained, nodding at the trunk. "I cut a chunk of the same kind of bark off another tree and trimmed it to fit this hole. When it's on you'd hardly know there was any hole here. Kept my note-books and stuff like that in here—dry as a bone and out of harm's way. Sort of a bush safety-deposit vault."

He set the bundle on the ground, groped again in the tree, and brought up a smaller package.

"That's all," he said. "Wish I'd cached a gun in there, but wishing doesn't get me anything. I've got the records of the expedition intact, anyway. That and one bum hammock. Nothing else."

With the bundle in his arms he went down to the landing. I picked up the other, and we followed.

"Here are smaller canoes than ours," I said, looking over the boats whose paddlers never again would sit in them. "Let us take one of them and leave the big one."

"Right. We'll take my own. It's light and fast, and it will just about carry us three. But before I go I want to do one thing for my boys up yonder."

"What?"

"Put up a good big cross among them. We can't bury them, but——"

"If you will pardon me, *senhor*, I would not do that now," Pedro objected. "Later, perhaps, but not tonight."

"Why not?"

"Because the *barbaros* may come back tomorrow to see if they have missed any loot. To find a cross here would set them searching the bush for miles around for the men who put it up. Now they do not know of us, and it is not well to let them know until we are ready. And I think we had better not leave that big canoe of theirs here. Let us take it farther on and hide it in some place not easily found. I have been thinking, and I believe I have a plan to clean out that snakes' den."

"Good boy! What is it?"

"Later on, *senhor*, I will tell you," my partner smiled. "But now let us act, not talk."

"All right."

Mack dropped his bundle into a narrow, swift-looking canoe. We stowed the larger package where it would ride well. Then he climbed the bank once more and stood silent, his hand at his forehead in salute. When he came back his face was working and his eyes wet. Without a word we pushed out, towing the long *ubá* behind us.

Some distance farther on we found a bush-grown inlet where the boat of the *barbaros* could be entirely concealed. We drove it in, bent bushes far down to cover its stern, and left it there. With the moon rolling high above us we struck off toward our distant camp.

XI

AFTER our slow, blind trip to this place in the clumsy *ubá*, the return through the moon-glare in Senhor Mack's speedy little boat was like play. Swiftly we swept on, with the water purring pleasantly under our bow, until we had passed through the twisting channel and entered again the *lagoa* on whose banks stood the Jararaca's camp and our own. There we slowed and became cautious.

The moonlight flooded the whole sheet of water, and on it we saw no boats. But that was no sign that it was not watched; and out of the many pairs of eyes in the Jararaca's gang it would take only one to spy us, and only one tongue to start an alarm. So we began to work along close to the southern bank, where we could blend with the jungle shadows. And as we neared the point opposite which the *enseada* opened, we paddled without lifting our blades, turning them under water at each slow stroke, so that the moon would not betray us by flashing off the wet wood.

On the northern jungle-line the firelight did not show now. Either the fires had sunk low or their glimmer was swallowed up by the brighter light of the moon. But the throb of the drums went on as before, floating to us across the water like the beating of some awful black heart. The cannibals still were awake.

No other sound of men came to us, and as we crawled on past the *enseada* we saw no blot on its surface. Down to the end of the wide water we traveled without any sign that we were seen. But we still stuck to the shore-line until that grassy point of land near our camp had slid out between us and the lagoon and we knew no watcher could possibly see us cut across the *ygarapé* to our own bank. Then I swung the stern.

But Pedro swerved the bow back. In a low tone he said:

"Now is as good a time as any to get our *machadinhas*. Tomorrow may be too late. Perhaps it is too late now—the *barbaros* may have been there, may even be there at this moment. But let us go and see."

I grunted assent, and we moved on without crossing. Now we lifted our paddles and took a freer swing, but we made no attempt at speed. Loop after loop of the *ygarapé* crept behind us until we saw the awful head of the *assacu* towering from its knoll. At the last turn we barely moved, floating on as lightly as a fallen leaf, ready for anything. Then Pedro grunted and stroked boldly. Except for ourselves, the water was empty.

Across to the clay hill we slid, taking good care to pass the place where the snake-head trail began. As we drew up beyond the tree, where the ground was safe, Pedro rose to leap ashore. But he did not make that jump. For a second he stood poised. Then he gave the bank a sudden jolt with his paddle, swerving the canoe outward. In one swoop he had caught up his rifle.

I threw my own gun to my shoulder. Somewhere in the shadows under that poison-tree something was creeping toward us.

Down to the edge came a black, horrible shape. Over my rifle-barrel I stared at it, ready to shoot but not sure whether it was man, beast, or fiend. Then I saw. It was man and beast both— perhaps fiend too. A big alligator, clutching in his jaws the body of one of the Indians we had left there, was sliding into the water.

"*Por Deus!*" Pedro muttered. "Perhaps our *machadinhas* are gone even though no more *barbaros* have come."

When the reptile had sunk from sight we lowered our guns and sent the canoe back to the shore.

"Beware of snakes!" I warned.

Both Pedro and Senhor Mack grunted. We got out on shore very carefully.

"I'll go ahead," said the blond man. "You lads ought to wear boots. Hand me a machete, somebody."

I passed him mine, and he tramped on before us. Step by step we followed him up the slope.

"Back up!" he suddenly warned.

With the words he swung the knife. A hiss sounded. The machete thudded down. The hiss died.

"Good thing I came first," said our American partner. "He nailed my foot. Didn't get through, though. These boots are tough."

"*Jararaca?*" Pedro questioned.

"Don't know. Most likely. Something wicked anyhow. Say, you lads better stay back. You might step on his head or another live one. What do you want? Just your tomahawks?"

"I thought, *senhor*, it would be well to throw the *barbaros* into the water," Pedro answered. "There the *jacarés* will quickly take care of them, and if other cannibals came there will be no sign of a fight—except blood."

"Good idea. You stay there and I'll haul them over to you. Guess your hatchets are still here. Here's one cuss now, all curled up."

We saw him stoop and look.

"Ugh! He's swollen like a poisoned pup. One of the guys that stepped on your trap. If you fellows hadn't been here this afternoon I'd look like this thing now—or worse."

After a minute he came toward us, dragging a body by the hair. And he went straight past. We saw a bloated corpse slide by and go tumbling into the *ygarapé*, where it sank from sight.

"There goes one of the scuts that butchered my boys," he said grimly, coming back. "I wanted to heave him to the 'gators myself. You can have the others."

One by one he brought them to us, and we threw them out into the water. The first was swollen like the one he had dragged past. Then came one with a *machadinha* driven deep into his skull, and as we worked the blade out he pulled the other up and dropped it. Pedro drew the hatchet from that one's head. The two we had killed with machetes came last and ended the count.

"Two dead by tomahawks, two by machetes, two by snake-bite—and the one the 'gator got," Senhor Mack summed up. "That cleans up the pot, and we can call it a day. Maybe I'd better find that snake and chuck him into the bush, though. Then there'll be nothing left here but tracks. Phew! That 'gator tied to the tree is getting to smell out loud."

Lighting matches, he went about until he found the snake he had killed in the dark.

"Yep, a *jararaca*," he said. "Good sign, that. We'll clean up that yellow Jararaca over on the hill—Judas! Here's another!"

Again the machete whistled in the air. Then we heard something soft go flying into the bush, and another thing of the same kind follow it.

"Suppose both of those squirmy cusses would have had a lot of fun slinging poison into my bare legs tonight if you lads hadn't stopped the cannibals from stripping me and trussing me up," said Mack as he returned to us. "But the boot's on the other foot. Anything more to do here?"

"Nothing, *senhor*," we told him.

And we went down to the canoe and shoved out and away from that accursed spot.

Back along the water we traveled swiftly until we neared the grassy point. There we slowed and sought a hiding-place for our canoe. After a little time we found it: a snug little spot under thick overhanging bush. We unloaded Senhor Mack's two bundles, got ashore, and started for our *tambo*. But somehow I got a desire to look again up the lagoon before we slept.

"All right," Mack agreed. "Never does any harm to look around. We'll squat here until you come back."

So I stepped toward the point. But I had gone less than a dozen steps when I halted. Into the air had come a sound which I felt rather than heard: a beat of paddles.

Back to the others I ran. Three words from me, and we were creeping to the edge of the water. There we crouched and watched.

The beat became plain. Water swashed. Before our eyes an eight-man *ubá* of savages surged past, bound for the *assacu*. Another followed, and another. They passed and were gone.

Wordless, motionless, we waited. The moon slid on westward. Life splashed in the water, howled in the forest, buzzed in the air. But no sound came from down the *ygarapé*.

Then came a confused murmur. Again sounded a rush of water. Paddles splashed as if driven in fear. The murmur became

voices grunting excitedly. An *ubá* shot past, crowded hard by the other two. They swirled around the point and disappeared at top speed toward the camp of the Jararaca.

We arose and ran to the point, where we watched those ugly war-boats rush into their *enseada* and vanish. We waited long for them to come out again, but nothing came. So finally we turned back toward our camp. And as we went I thought of what I had heard.

Those cannibals, hurrying away from the place, had been mouthing one word—

"*Anyi!*"

And the Tupi word "*anyi*" means—

"Devil!"

XII

BACK at our *tambo*, around which splotches of white light crawled along the ground as the moon crept westward, we helped our North American friend patch his hammock so that it would hold him up for the night. When the task was done and the bed hung beside ours, he asked:

"Now, friend Pedro, what's your big idea? How are we to smash the Son of the Snake?"

"My biggest idea just now, *senhor*," Pedro smiled, "is to sleep until morning."

"Oh, rats! We can sleep when there's nothing else to do. Come on, loosen up."

"In the morning, *senhor*. As you say, the time to sleep is when there is nothing else to do. We can do no more tonight. So now I sleep."

"You're an exasperating cuss," Mack grumbled. "But you're talking sense at that. I'm dog tired, and we can think better after we rest."

"Just so, *senhor*. Good night."

And we curled up in our nets and relaxed.

Morning broke faint and gray, but after the sun sucked up the usual swamp mists the air grew clear and hot. We found a dead tree and cut from it wood which gave a swift fire with little smoke, and over this we boiled our coffee. As soon as the black liquid was hot we killed the blaze with mud. And after a spying trip to the point, where we saw only the bare water, we smoked and talked.

"Now, *senhor*," said Pedro, "you want most of all to kill the Jararaca. We are with you in that. But also you want to stamp out the gang of the Jararaca, leaving not one alive. We are with you in that also. Not only are such beasts unfit to live, but they make this place unsafe for any man.

"We seek rubber, and if we find it our fellow *seringueiros* must come in here to work it. But they can not work any region where lives so deadly a band of man-eaters as that of the Jararaca. And even if we find no rubber here, this is the *seringal* of our *coronel*, and as men of the *coronel* it is our duty as well as our desire to destroy these snakes before they strike at the *coronel's* interests."

"Quite so," Mack nodded.

"But the job of destroying them is too great for three men armed as poorly as we are. You have no weapons at all; and though we two are well equipped to fight and run, we do not want to run. When we open our war we must stay with it to the end. I do not know how many men are against us, but they must number at least half a hundred. Lourenço and I have outfought odds as great as that before now, but those were low creatures who were hardly more than beasts and who feared us as demons, so that they were defeated by their own terror. These fighters of the Son of the Snake are not such fools.

"What is more, their place on that hill is too strong for us to attack. Its front is a steep, bare slope of slippery clay rising out of the water of the *enseada*. The side where we crawled up yesterday and saw you face the Jararaca is almost as steep as the front, and its underbrush has been cleared away so that the cover would be very poor for any one trying to storm the top. The other side, toward the *lagoa*, undoubtedly is the same."

"It is," the blond man agreed. "That's the side where I went up and down. Path leads from the canoe-landing to the top."

"So I thought. That leaves only the fourth side, back in the bush, of which we know nothing; but it is a safe guess that the rear is well protected. The place is almost a *forte*.

"The first thing for us to do, then, is to find enough men, with enough weapons, to give us a fighting chance against the *barbaros*. To go against them without a fighting chance would be to die like fools. Am I right?"

"Couldn't be any righter," Mack admitted. "But where are your men and guns?"

"On other parts of this *seringal*. And to get them we must first return to headquarters."

"Too slow! I want to clean up now."

"With what?" Pedro demanded. "Your bare hands? That is all you have now. I tell you frankly, *senhor*, I will not throw away my life for no good. I have no great objection to dying, but I do not intend to give my arms and legs to feed such brutes as those. If you will go against them alone, go. Perhaps the Jararaca and his men will stand in line and let you strangle them one by one. But I doubt it."

The other scowled and growled; but nodded grudgingly.

"You're right," he conceded. "How long does it take us to reach your *coronel?*"

"It took us nine days to reach this place, but we traveled slowly. This time we shall go fast. And have no fear that the *barbaros* will run away while we are gone. They will keep until we return."

"All right, let's go!" Mack snapped, rising swiftly. "And let's go light. Least weight, most speed."

"We take only our hammocks and what food we need," Pedro answered. "We shall have a good deal to pack when we return. There is another part to my plan, which I shall speak of later. Now our task is to make speed northward."

Both Mack and I looked curiously at him, wondering what other thing he had in mind. But we asked no questions. We fell to making up light packs of food.

Then to me came a half-formed idea. I stopped my work.

"Pedro," I said, "I stay here until you return. There is no need of all three of us going to headquarters. You two are enough."

"Huh? Leave you here alone? Nothing doing!" Mack protested.

I smiled. Pedro laughed.

"Do not worry about Lourenço, *senhor*," he said. "He has gone alone more than once among the worst dangers of the jungle, and you see he is still alive. Even if the *barbaros* caught him they would find him hard to hold. If this Jararaca is a snake, Lourenço is an eel."

"I get you," the blond man said with a quick grin. "One of those electric eels that pack an awful wallop, eh? But what can you do here alone, Lourenço?"

"Perhaps I can learn a few things of value," I suggested. "And possibly some other victim may be brought to the *assacu* before you return. If I can not save him I can shoot him. That would be mercy."

"I'll say so," he agreed, his face darkening. "But listen here, old-timer—don't get too brash and kill the Jararaca on your own hook while I'm gone. He's my meat. Understand?"

"The time to kill a snake, *senhor*, is whenever you can," I told him coolly. "It does not matter who kills it, so long as it is killed. I make no promises."

For a moment I thought he would again refuse to go. But then he looked down at his empty cartridge-belt and holster, spread his hands in a hopeless way, shrugged his shoulders, and resumed his work on his pack. And a little later he and Pedro stood up with a scant week's rations on their shoulders, ready to go.

"I am leaving the gold cross with you," Pedro said. "It has led us to the demons who hung that poor fellow on the *assacu*, even as I thought it might. Now it may protect you while you are alone."

"You talk like a priest," I laughed. "Take it or leave it—I do not care. What interests me more is the fact that you are leaving the jug."

Senhor Mack snickered and Pedro grinned. We strode away to the *ygarapé*, leaving jug and cross behind us. While they settled themselves in the canoe I went again to the grassy point, saw nothing alarming, and returned to them. Then we struck off smartly down the winding water.

Reaching the *assacu*, Pedro and Mack again went ashore on the safe side of the tree, while I kept watch along the *ygarapé*. Quickly but thoroughly they removed the last traces of our fight and our moonlight visit—traces which the savages could not have seen last night in the deep shadows, but which they might perceive if they came again by daylight. They covered the blood-stains with fresh earth, which they patted down carefully and then smeared out smooth with hatfuls of water.

In the same way, working back toward the edge, they blotted out every track made by Senhor Mack's boot-soles and heels. And when they again entered the canoe we smoothed away the marks left in the bank last night by our bow and Pedro's paddle.

"Now," said Pedro, "any *barbaros* coming here to investigate will get nothing for their

pains—except, perhaps, more death from our snake-head trail. There is no sign that the *ubá* bringing you, Senhor Mack, ever reached here. You, and the seven cannibals with you, and the boat itself, have disappeared into nothing. Where a human corpse should stand against the tree is only a stinking *jacaré*. They will have something to think about."

"They had something to think about last night," I said. "They were panting '*Anyi*' as they fled. That means 'devil,' *senhor*."

"Yes? Thought the devil was after them, eh? Well, they'll be dead sure of it a few days from now, I'm thinking."

And Pedro, smiling at some thought of his own, echoed—

"I too am thinking so."

Down to the end of the *ygarapé* we pushed swiftly. Pedro and the blond man got out. I stayed in the boat.

"Dang it, I don't feel right to quit you like this!" Mack grumbled. "But it's the only thing to do if you won't come along. Take care of yourself, old chap."

"I am in the habit of taking care of myself," I smiled. "Go with God!"

Pedro waved a hand, turned, and plunged into the bush. Mack followed. They vanished, swallowed by the jungle. I was alone.

XIII

IF THE two who were gone expected me to spend my time lolling in my hammock and hugging the jug they were wrong. The first thing I did, after hiding the canoe and reaching camp, was to bury the jug at a rear corner of the *tambo*, where it would be safe and out from under foot. Then I cleared up the things left lying about in the hasty departure, oiled my gun, smoked a cigaret, and thought.

As the result of that thinking I went out that afternoon on another spying trip. Halfway around the *enseada* I sneaked, almost to the place where that path of the *barbaros* turned so suddenly into the forest. I did not enter the path itself for two reasons: it was not necessary to my present purpose, and I felt a man in it.

Yes, *senhores*, I mean just that. I did not see him, hear him, or even smell him—I felt him. I knew he was there as surely as I knew I was there. And I took great care that he should not hear anything of me, for it was no part of my plan to kill any man there just then. I stole back a little distance, then wormed my way down to the water's edge and squatted there studying the hill of the cannibals and all I could see around it.

Pedro's estimate had been correct. The front of the place could not be scaled at any time, and the two sides were too steep and too well cleared to be rushed by anything less than a small army. Paths led to the top from both sides, I knew, but these probably were guarded at ordinary times, both above and below. The man in the path nearest to me undoubtedly was a sentry stationed at a fixed post, as he did not seem to go away—I still felt that he was there. And after watching awhile I became sure that the tongue of low land opposite me, running westward and forming a shore of both the *enseada* and the *lagoa*, also was guarded. Across the water I glimpsed an Indian passing slowly up and down through the undergrowth.

Not much chance of a few men reaching the hilltop from this direction, I decided. I began to speculate about the rear of the place, and half determined that I would take a look at it when the time was more favorable. That time must be at night, when I could pass unseen down the *lagoa* in the canoe and later prowl by moonlight.

While I thought of this, two *ubás* full of paddlers came swinging up the bay from the lake. Behind each of them trailed smaller canoes, empty. They passed in silence, and their men showed none of the fear I had observed among those who fled from the *ygarapé* last night. I had not seen nor heard any visitors to the *assacu* today, and was quite sure none had been there. These men evidently had done what Pedro predicted—returned to the death-strewn camp of Senhor Mack to search for anything overlooked after the fight; and I silently blessed my partner for preventing the planting of any cross among the bones there.

The boats went to the usual place and the men got out in a calm, unhurried way. For a few minutes some of them stood talking. Then all faded away inland.

Having learned all I could at this spot, I crept away and returned to my *tambo*. The air now was stifling hot, and my head grew heavy. I decided to sleep for the rest of the afternoon, and then, after dark, to take out the canoe and go down the lagoon for further study of the Jararaca's place.

Perhaps the paths along the *enseada* would be left unguarded after sundown—savages seldom keep sentries out at night, and these men did not know any enemy was near—and in that case I could safely prowl close to their camp. So I lay down, knowing the usual night clamor would wake me at dark.

But while I slept the weather changed. I awoke in blackness to hear rain pounding the jungle. It was not a thunder-squall, but a hard steady rain that would last most of the night and blot the moon from the sky. After a smoke I went to sleep again and knew nothing more until day.

Now it is a habit of mine in the bush to glance around me as soon as I awake in the morning, before putting my feet to the ground. One never knows what sort of thing may have crawled into an open *tambo* during the night, and it is always well to look about before rising. Most of the time one sees nothing new, but now and then there may be something worth looking at. And this morning, after making my usual quick inspection of the ground, I kept my bare feet in the hammock.

Under me, coiled ready to strike, its wicked eyes watching me and its forked tongue quivering, was a *jararaca*.

It had crept in there, perhaps, to keep out of the rain, though a *jararaca* does not dislike water. At any rate, it was there, and it showed no intention of going away. And while it stayed under my hammock I was in a bad position. I had no fear that it would strike straight up at me, though I have heard of snakes doing such things. But if I stepped out it surely would bury its fangs in my foot. And unless I did step out there was scant chance of my killing it.

As you *senhores* know, a hammock is a tipsy and tricksy bed at best. Many a time I have fallen out in my sleep while turning over or disturbed by a dream. When a hammock does dump you it does so very suddenly, giving you no chance whatever to save yourself. So you can see that it is no place from which to try to kill snakes.

This *jararaca* was not very large. My machete lay beside me, and my gun was within easy reach. But the deadliness of such a creature does not depend on its length; and any attempt to swing my bush-knife or rifle down on this snake would undoubtedly result in unbalancing myself so that I would sprawl beside him—and then I would no longer be a menace to that other Jararaca over on the hill. Even if I got my gun without tipping out it could be used only as a club, for of course any gunshot would reach the ears of the *barbaros*. And those two weapons were the only things within my reach. So I did the only thing possible—lay still and tried to plan some way to rid myself of the danger.

While I thought I looked all about the place, seeking something that would give me an idea. But I saw nothing useful. And the most useless thing of all seemed to be that big gold crucifix which still hung from the ridge-pole overhead. My eyes went from it to the snake, and from the snake to the cross, and all my looking at them did me no good. Each stayed where it was. And so did I.

After a time I tired of the sight of them and stared out at the bush, still puzzling over what to do. And suddenly I saw a thing so unexpected that it stopped my breath. There at the edge of the undergrowth, motionless as any bush, was the head and neck of another snake. And that snake was a *mussurana*.

XIV

NOW I am not at all religious, *senhores*, nor have I ever been. If I were, I probably should think that the cross hanging over me had brought that *mussurana* to aid me. But I do not believe in such things. I do not believe any cross, or any priest either, can save my life in this world or my soul in the next.

Yet I am not one of those who think there is no God. And I do believe that whenever *Deus Padre* allows an evil thing to come into the world he also creates a good thing to destroy it. And whether this be so or not, I know that as our jungle harbors the venomous *jararaca*, so also it protects the good *mussurana*, which slays the *jararaca*.

That is what the *mussurana* lives for. Though itself a serpent, it is a killer of serpents. And though the deadliest poison of another snake cannot harm it, it has no poison of its own and does no harm to man. True, it is not at all handsome, and its flat head looks vicious and grim. But if ever I saw a snake which seemed beautiful and was as welcome as a friend in time of trouble, it was that morning when I spied that

shining blue thing lying there with its fierce gaze fixed on the coil under me.

If I had lain still before, I now was motionless as a log. I hardly breathed, feeling that the slightest move might draw the attention of the *mussurana* to me and stop it from coming in. Yet I need not have feared. Its whole brain was centered on its enemy. And slowly, its head a little off the ground, its tongue darting, it crept smoothly out into the open.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, it came sliding forward until it was all in sight. In the watery morning sunlight its steely blue body shone like a four-foot gun-barrel slipping silently along the dirt. Into the shadow of the tambo it crept without a pause—on, on until it was within a yard of the *jararaca*.

Then under me sounded a startled hiss. The *jararaca*, which had been fixedly watching me, suddenly saw the danger almost upon it. At the sound the *mussurana* stopped an instant, and the two reptiles glared at each other. Then the *mussurana* resumed its glide.

It seemed to me that both snakes darted upon each other at the same instant. Such things happen so quickly that the eye can not follow them. But the *jararaca* flashed from its coil, and for a second the blue destroyer became a blur. Then I saw the *jararaca* jerk its fangs out of the side of the other snake; and I saw also that the *mussurana* had whipped several folds of itself around the deadly reptile and sunk its own teeth into its enemy.

The fangs of the *mussurana* had struck several inches behind the neck, and this was not at all the hold it wanted. As the *jararaca* pulled away its head the other did the same; but it kept its twining body-grip. It reached for a hold nearer the head—and got it. As its fangs sank in for the second time, the *jararaca* also bit again. And then, locked together, they rolled about as I have seen two battling men roll when grappling on the ground.

Lashing, writhing, squirming, they struggled for minutes. But now I could see that the *jararaca* was trying, not to overpower its enemy, but to wriggle out of the gripping blue coils. And the *mussurana*, though it seemed trying to squeeze its prey to death, was not attempting that at all. It knew just how it wanted to kill that *jararaca*, and it was working very coolly toward carrying out its plan. While it gripped the venomous snake it was also creeping upward around it, working toward the deadly head. And at length it clamped its fangs into the head itself.

For a moment it lay quiet as if resting. Its body now was twined all down that of its enemy in a close, even spiral, and only the head and tail of the *jararaca* could be seen. Then the *mussurana*, moving its muscles upward, seemed to bunch itself around the throat of the other reptile.

The head of the *jararaca*, still held in the blue snake's teeth, came forward a little, then bent back. With sure, terrible power the destroyer was stretching the neck of its victim. When that neck was drawn taut the blue snake began twisting it from side to side.

How long that twisting kept on I do not know. But I do know it lasted until the bones of the *jararaca* were ground loose from one another and its neck was hopelessly shattered. At last the *mussurana* unclamped its jaws, loosened its coil, and let the weakly twitching body lie free. After another short rest it seized the head of the conquered snake and began to swallow it.

For some time longer I lay there, watching the blue-steel creature swell as it drew the quivering *jararaca* down its gullet. At last only the tip of the slender tail hung from its mouth. Then this too faded from sight. The deadly thing which had held me a prisoner in my hammock had vanished from the face of the earth.

I dropped my feet to the ground and stood up. The *mussurana*, which had given me no attention whatever, drew back in a startled way. But as I made no more sudden moves, it lay quietly watching me for a time, then calmly glided away toward the bush.

It was returning to the place from which it had come. I watched it, wishing I had some way of rewarding it for the good turn it had done for me. And as I thought this there came to me a curiosity to know where the creature had its lair. It was quite likely that before I left this part of the jungle I might kill another snake in my wanderings, and if I knew where my friend the *mussurana* lived I could take the dead thing there and give it a good meal without the work of slaying it first.

A foolish thought, yes. But just then I felt very grateful to that blue fighter; and so, having nothing better to do than to

follow up my foolish thought, I stepped softly after the creature. It had vanished now into the undergrowth. But the wet ground was soft, and I have a pair of bush-trained eyes, so that it was not hard for me to trail the four-foot reptile, heavy with its swallowed prey. I felt that it would go straight to its den to sleep for the next few days, as is the habit of snakes after a good kill. And, traveling lightly to avoid alarming it, I followed its track until I neared a tree between whose buttress roots opened a hole.

At the bottom of this hole I spied the steely glint of the *mussurana*, creeping sluggishly in out of sight. Satisfied that this was its home, I went no farther. As I returned to the *tambo* I marked bushes lightly with my machete, so that I could come back at any time.

When I emerged in the clearing and set about getting breakfast I laughed at my foolishness. But before I finished my meal I stopped grinning.

Somehow the gold cross hanging in the *tambo* bothered me. Somehow there kept beating at my memory the sneering words of the Son of the Snake to Senhor Mack—

"Who lives by the cross dies by the snake!"

And suddenly, *senhores*, those words and the cross and the blue *mussurana* jumped together and struggled in my head as those two snakes had rolled about under my hammock. Then they straightened out into an idea—an idea that almost made me dizzy. And after staring at my coffee awhile I muttered:

"*Vive Deus!* I will do it!"

XV

DAYS passed before I put my idea to the test. It was not one of those ideas which can be tried as soon as thought of. Between the thought and the trial lay several steps which had to be taken slowly. The idea depended very largely on my newly found friend, the *mussurana*. And before doing anything else I had to make that blue snake acquainted with me.

As you know, a snake which has gorged itself is sluggish for a while afterward. Not until it has digested its meal will it grow hungry and active again; and if it has fed well, this time of torpor lasts several days. If the *mussurana* was not alarmed it would stay in its retreat for a week or more before starting out on another hunt. So, since I knew just where to find it, I could visit it each day and let it become accustomed to me. And that is what I did.

The first day, going quietly to its hole, I squatted a yard away. The hole was not large, and in the blackness beyond the opening I could see nothing. But I was sure that the creature was there, and thought it might be sleepily watching me. So I remained quiet for some time. Then I began to whistle.

My whistling was not loud, you may be sure. I kept it low enough to be heard by no ear more than a few feet away, yet strong enough to reach the hidden snake. I did not try to make music, but whistled steadily on one note for a while, then shifted to another. And after a while, gazing fixedly at that hole, I saw within it a shadowy flat head. The *mussurana* was listening and watching.

For quite a long time I whistled away on that same note. I kept at it until my cheeks pained me, my eyes burned from the steady stare, and my legs cramped under me. During that time the dim head had slipped forward until I could see it plainly, as well as an inch or two of neck. But the snake was too sluggish or too uncertain of mê to come any farther. So, rising as slowly as possible on my aching legs, I went away, knowing that my face and the sound of my whistle were planted firmly in the *mussurana's* brain.

The next day I did the same thing. Before I went away that time the shiny blue body had come out of its hole more than a foot; and as I arose to go, still softly whistling, it did not draw back. When, after a couple of slow steps, I paused and glanced down, it still lay there with eyes fixed on me. Probably it did not return to its doze until I had passed away through the bush to my camp.

So, day by day, I serenaded that *mussurana*. If the *coronel* and Pedro could have seen me squatting by the hour beside a hole and whistling to a snake they would have thought me stark mad. There were times when I too called myself a fool. What the snake thought about me I do not know, but I have no doubt it was puzzled.

Yet, as the swallowed *jararaca* digested and the blue fighter became more alert, it also grew friendly. By the sixth day it not only came out to meet me and listen to my

noises, but it allowed me to pick it up. I handled it very gently and let it crawl along my arms, though I must confess that I did not like the feel of the thing. It made no effort to escape, and when I set it on the ground again it curled partly around itself and lay lazily in the sun, looking at me and listening as I talked to it in a crooning tone.

For a longer time than usual I stayed with it that day, mumbling to it. I told it what I intended to do, and it never winked an eye. I even gave it a name before I went away. I called it Matador Azul, meaning "Blue Killer." And in the days that followed I always thought of it by that name, though I dropped the "blue" part of it and called it only Matador.

This was not all I did during those days alone in the jungle. Twice I made the long trip by land to the poison-tree—by land, because it was wiser to keep hidden in the thick cover than to take chances of being caught in the canoe by *barbaros*. Nothing new had happened at the *assacu*, and at no time did I see or hear any savages going there. Those whom I did see were all on the lagoon or the bay or in the bush near the hill.

At night I made a couple of journeys, once by land and once by water, to the paths on each side of the bay. And I learned that both were watched after dark as well as during the day—at least while the moon shone. On the second journey I nearly got myself caught, for two guards were on the path at the time, and I nearly walked into them. As it happened, some sort of animal fight started in the bush near them just then, and while they looked and listened to the noise of it I slipped away unseen.

With these and other scouting trips, which gave me little new information but used up much time, I kept quite busy when I was not visiting my friend Matador. I also put in some hours at the work of weaving a small *atura* basket with a lid. This I took with me on the seventh day, when I went to see Matador. And when I came back to camp with the basket the *mussurana* was inside it.

Matador now was quite brisk and wide-awake, and I knew that unless he was confined he would soon seek another kill. If he found a good one he would be stupid for another week or more, and that was not what I wanted. At the same time I did not want him so hungry that he would slip away from me at the first chance. So, leaving the lid fastened down, I went hunting for a small *jararaca*.

I was lucky enough to find one less than a foot long. Using a forked stick and a cord, I took it alive, after which I carried it to camp and presented it to Matador as a light luncheon. He swallowed it promptly and then settled down in his new home, well content.

And now I was ready to test my idea.

It was as crazy and foolhardy an idea, no doubt, as a man ever had. Yet a bold, crazy plan sometimes succeeds where a more sane and cautious scheme would fail. And I now was so tired of hiding and sneaking and waiting for Pedro to return, and so curious about the Jararaca and his camp, that anything seemed better than more days and nights of skulking uselessly in the bush.

In my one view of the white-skinned cannibal chief I had seen that he was swollen with conceit; so vain that he twisted the name "son of a snake" into an indication that he was known to the world. I had learned that he had a murderous hatred for the cross and all it stood for. If he had any god at all it must be some foul serpent-god.

And whether or not he had such a god, I felt that he was crazed on the subject of snakes. His pride in his name, his snaky look and movements, his diabolical habit of sending white men to die in torment by snake-bites at the *assacu*, his boast that "who lives by the cross dies by the snake"—all these things indicated that his brain had a snaky twist.

So now, armed with a snake of my own and a jug of rum, I was going to pay a call on the Jararaca in his den.

XVI

VERY early in the morning, while the waning moon still shone and the eastern sky gave no sign of dawn, I pushed the canoe out from its hiding-place and began paddling eastward. In the boat lay a small pack, consisting of my hammock and food arranged around the jug. With this, but not fastened to it, was the *atura* in which Matador dozed. My gun, my *machadinha*, and the gold cross I left behind. The only weapons likely to be useful to me in this venture were my machete and my wits.

Before daybreak I was safely out of sight

beyond the other end of the lagoon. I had decided on what sort of story I was to tell, and my movements and appearance must bear out that tale. I had already attended to my looks. I was naked to the waist, my breeches were torn and mud-stained, my face was overgrown with a villainous black beard, and my hair was matted and caked in places with dry clay. Besides this, I wore on my head some long parrot feathers found days previously in the bush, where some hawk or other prowler had made a kill. I doubt if the men of the Jararaca themselves looked much more wild and hard than I. And now, having reached the place from which I was to appear, I dozed in the canoe until the sun was well up.

Then I stroked slowly to the mouth of the *lagoa* and looked down it, hoping to see some *barbaros*. Before long I spied a canoe cruising along near shore, a tall savage in its bow, spearing fish. At once I swung boldly out into the middle of the lake and paddled westward.

Out swerved the canoe of the Jararaca's men. Straight for me it drove. In its bow the tall Indian still stood, balancing himself to the strokes, his spear held forward. I kept coolly on, without either pause or haste, until their bow came within twenty feet. Then I held my paddle and raised my empty right hand.

They slowed, backed water, and stared. I said no word while their eyes went over me, resting longest on those feathers in my hair. The boats slowly drifted toward each other. At length, speaking in Tupi, I asked—

"Who are you?"

The spearman answered—

"Men of the Snake."

"What snake? The Jararaca?"

Surprize showed in their eyes. The spearman replied:

"The Son of the Snake. Jararaca."

I nodded as if well pleased.

"Take me to him. I have traveled far to find him."

Again they stared. An evil grin came into their faces. Here was a fool asking for death! With a grunt the spearman moved his head toward the *enseada*. The paddles stroked again, and side by side we moved into the bay and on to the hill.

There I slung my pack on my shoulders, looped the line of the *atura* around my forehead, and looked inquiringly at the spearman as if I did not know which way to go. He pointed to the path and up the hill. So up the hill I went, the canoemen following close on my heels.

On the flat hill-top more savages crowded around me, their faces ugly. But the spearman growled, and no hand was lifted against me. Onward we swung to that spot before the house where Senhor Mack had stood some days before. There the spearman motioned for me to halt. As I did so he turned into the house.

The other savages watched me with snaky eyes, saying nothing. I stood in a bold, careless manner, looking around at them. After a minute or two I unslung the *atura* and set it very gently on the ground before me. My care in handling it drew their attention to it. One fellow, curious, put out a foot and shoved it a little. I snarled and glared at him. He glowered back, but did not touch it again. The rest became all the more interested in it.

Thus we stood when through the doorway came the Jararaca.

My first straight stare into his face told me something. Before, when I had peered at him from behind a tree some distance away, I had thought him white. Now I saw that though his skin was white his blood was far from pure. His high cheekbones and slant eyes were those of the Peruvian Indian. His nose and mouth were those of a negro. The blood of three races was in him. And of all mixtures of blood in our country, that of Spaniard, Indian and negro is worst.

Black, glittering, evil, his eyes went over me as had those of his men. Like them, he looked longest at the feathers in my clayed hair. And, like them, he gazed narrow-lidded at the *atura* before me. While he still watched that basket I spoke, slow and deep.

"From the great chief Yacu, ruler of white Indians, and from the people of the Blue Snake, I bring greeting and a message to the famous Son of the Snake, Jararaca."

He lifted his head proudly.

"*Si?* Speak on."

"The great name of the Jararaca has been borne across the rivers and the forest by the little snakes of the jungle and has come to the ears of Yacu. The little snakes have said that the mighty Son of the Snake has a white skin like that of Yacu himself; that the men of the Jararaca speak across the

distances with tongues of talking wood, as do the white Indians of the west; that they also feast on their enemies, as do the men of the Blue Snake; and that the Jararaca hates, even as Yacu hates, the cross which the priests bring into this land."

At the name of the cross his face twisted savagely.

"If the little snakes have spoken truth," I went on, "then Yacu and the Jararaca are brothers at heart, and they may work together at that which may bring even greater power and glory to the Son of the Snake."

There I stopped. Silence hung around us while he thought about this amazing talk of mine, watching me without a flicker of the lids.

- "I will hear the message of Yacu," he softly hissed.

"I, the messenger of Yacu, have come far and am worn by travel," I said as if displeased. "Is it fitting that the words of a chief be spoken to all the world, or that his messenger be kept standing among ordinary men?"

"Does Yacu send gifts?" he asked in return.

"Yacu, ruler of a thousand fighting men," I answered, glancing around to show him that I saw he had fewer than a hundred followers, "sends no gifts to a chief who has not yet shown himself friendly. When the Son of the Snake has spoken words of amity the gifts will come."

"Why does so powerful a chief send as his messenger only one man—and that man a white?"

There was a sneer in his tone.

"Because his own men know not this country. I, who have traveled the jungle far and wide, could find the Jararaca more quickly than a hundred of the Blue Snake men. I come alone because a lone man travels fastest. And I am sent because I speak more than one tongue, while no man of Yacu speaks any language other than this."

With that I made noises that meant nothing to him or to me either. They were only noises that sounded like words.

"I have said that Yacu sends no gifts," I continued. "By that I mean such gifts as he would send to a chief if he knew that chief to be one with him. Yet he sends, as a token of friendship, something which is on my back. And he sends, not as a gift but as a sign that my words are true, the Blue Snake of his people."

Squatting, I loosened the lid of the basket and whistled softly on the note which Matador liked best. Then, slipping my hands under him, I rose with the gleaming blue snake curled over my arms.

A sudden grunt came from the cannibals. Even the Jararaca looked startled. Standing calmly, but hoping fervently that the *mussurana* would not start wriggling away from me, I held my arms still and let him do as he willed.

Matador behaved nobly. Looping himself easily over one arm, he crawled up along it, around my neck, and partly out on the other arm. There he paused, his head raised, his unwinking stare going from one to another of the faces around him.

Speaking in Tupi, so that all could understand me, I said—

"The Blue Snake of Yacu, leader of a thousand warriors, who devours his enemies as the snake swallows his prey, and who stretches the hand of brotherhood across the jungle to the Jararaca."

No man spoke. But they glanced sidewise at one another, and the Jararaca scowled but looked thoughtful too. Every man of them knew the *mussurana* was more powerful than the *jararaca*, and that against it all the *jararaca's* venom was useless. Whether my words and the sight of the blue snake made some of them think further and feel that, unless the Jararaca accepted the friendship of Yacu, the thousand warriors of the Blue Snake people would attack and devour them, I do not know. But the Jararaca himself, no doubt, thought of that instantly. He said nothing, but his eyes never lifted from Matador.

Soon Matador tired of looking around him. Creeping on along my arm, he draped himself in curves again and looked down at his basket. I took his hint at once and lowered him into the *atura*, where he curled up lazily. Then I looked the Son of the Snake in the eye.

"The message of Yacu has not been spoken," I reminded him.

With a slow wave of the hand he pointed to the doorway. Turning, he glided into the house. With the snake-basket hanging from one hand, and the pack still on my back, I followed.

XVII

IN MANY ways the inside of that long house was much like the *malocas*, or tribal houses, of wild people I had seen in other parts of the jungle. But there were differences. In the *malocas* the hammocks generally are strung up with no idea of order, hanging wherever they may; while here they were arranged in two regular rows along the sides, divided by a wide aisle running from end to end of the house. Also, there was not one woman or child in the place. It was like a *caserna*—barracks.

The Jararaca, whose white man's brain no doubt had caused this orderly arrangement and the posting of guards on the paths by day and night, did not stop here. On down the aisle he went to another doorway at the end, and through this into a much smaller room. This, I could see, was his own private room—the quarters of the *commandante*.

Here were a rough but solid table, a chair, a gaudily decorated hammock, and other furnishings of the sort. On one wall, beyond the hammock, were a number of rifles, each resting on two wooden pins. Machetes stood bunched in a corner. On the table lay a heavy revolver. It was just the right size to fit into the empty holster of Senhor Mack, and I had no doubt that it was his.

All these weapons probably had belonged to men captured by the savages.

The Jararaca, motioning toward the chair, went to the hammock and sat down. But when he sat, the revolver had disappeared from the table and was in his hand. I did not see him seize it as he passed, but he had it. And as I glanced out into the big room I saw that it now was filled with *barbaros*, and that one very ugly brute holding a club stood just outside our door. No man entered the quarters of the chief, but all were ready to jump at me at a word.

I slipped the pack off my shoulders, laid it on the table, and leaned the basket against it. Folding my arms across my chest and paying no attention to the chair, I stood facing the Son of the Snake.

"The message of Yacu and his thousand men," I said, "is this:

" 'The cross and the men of the cross have long been a threat to the power of the men of the jungle. There is no place where those skirted men of the cross will not go. They carry their false words to the men and women of the bush, and little by little the bush people grow tame, afraid, slaves of the cross and the gun of the white men.

" 'The skirted men themselves carry no guns, but they are all the more dangerous for that. Preaching peace, they go safely where men with guns would die. Yet behind them always lurk the men with guns, and when the priests have conquered the people with smooth words, then come the guns to see that they stay conquered. So the power of the cross grows and the strength of the free people of the jungle wanes.

" 'It is time that the jungle men band together and sweep the cross and all its followers from this land. It is time that the lying priests be destroyed and their settlements laid waste. What Yacu and the people of the Blue Snakes could do alone they have done, and in all their land no cross or priest can be found. Now he asks that his brother chiefs do their part, add their strength to his, and clean their own lands of this danger. So shall all this jungle be freed and the power of the chiefs increase.

" 'Yacu has no wish to make himself chief of chiefs or to swell his own power. His own lands are wide enough and his own people strong enough, and he wants no more. He grows old, and in time he will be buried in his clay jar under his house, like his fathers before him. Yet, though old, he is strong and long of arm, and he will reach far and strike hard against his enemies. Any chief who opposes him in this cleaning of the land is not the friend of Yacu. He who is not the friend of Yacu is the enemy of Yacu. Yacu waits to know whether his brother chief, the Jararaca, is his friend."

I paused, staring steadily back into his unwavering eyes. Then I went on:

"Such is the message of Yacu. Now I speak to the Jararaca a thought which is not in the mind of Yacu, but which has just come into my own mind since seeing the Jararaca, his men, and his camp. The soldierly arrangement here shows me that the Jararaca has the mind of a great leader. And Yacu, leader of a thousand warriors, grows old. He has no sons. The Jararaca could rule a thousand men as well as half a hundred."

There I stopped. For minutes he sat motionless, wordless, his expression unchanged. But in his eyes grew a hot gleam

that showed his mind was leaping along the trail I had opened to him. To become the ally of Yacu—to get control of Yacu's thousand men—to use this strength to crush other chiefs and add their warriors to his own—to make himself the terror of the whole land—it was a thought to fire a greater man than he. When at last he spoke he said only one word, but that word was a long, soft, pleased hiss.

"*Ssssi.*"

Calmly I turned to the table. With my back to the door I unwrapped my pack, removed the slabs of fish, and, shielding the jug with my body from the eyes of the *barbaros* outside, held it so that the Jararaca could see it.

"A slight token of friendship from Yacu," I said. "Is it well that the men of the Jararaca look upon it?"

Another kind of gleam shone in his face as he eyed the jug. Rising swiftly, he stepped to the door, shut it, and dropped a bar across it. Then he faced me, the revolver still in his hand.

"Let the messenger of Yacu taste first the gift of his master," he said with a snaky nod.

Knowing it was the last drink I was likely to get from that jug, and knowing also that he suspected poison, I took a hearty swallow. I tried to keep from coughing, but could not. So I said with a grin—

"The gift of Yacu, like Yacu himself, is strong."

With that I stepped around the table, where I again stood with arms folded. He slipped up to the board, tilted the jug with his left hand, poured liquor into a gourd cup, watched me keenly a minute, then lifted the cup and sipped at the fiery rum. For the first time something like a smile flitted across his face. With swift, thirsty gulps he drained the cup. And when he set it down he did not cough.

Without turning his back to me—though the table was between us and I had no gun—he returned to his hammock. Again he motioned toward the chair. This time I sat down. His eyes went to the jug, then back to me.

"Let the messenger tell me more of the people of the Blue Snake," he demanded.

So I told him. And now I told him truth—that is, almost truth. As you may know, it is true that along the Javary live Indians who are cannibals, who use that talking wood, and who are much lighter of skin than savages usually are. They have not the fairness of you North American *senhores*, but they are no darker than some of us Portuguese whites, especially when we are well tanned. They are the Mayorunas, who live in *malocas* holding from one hundred to two hundred people, each *maloca* governed by its own chief and usually miles from the next tribal house; fierce fighters, jealous of their women, and eaters of their enemies killed in battle. How many of them there may be I do not know, but if all were brought together they probably would make as deadly a body of warriors as could be found anywhere along our frontier.

I had been among these people more than once. Each time, through luck not likely to come my way again, I had managed to keep myself alive and get away again unharmed. So I knew a good deal about them, and what I knew I now told to the Jararaca, though I twisted some parts to fit into my tale of Yacu and his people. Indeed, I did not tell him I spoke of the Mayorunas, calling them always the men of the Blue Snake. It was quite possible that he knew something of the white cannibals and their ways. And the truth that I told would go far to support the other things I said which were not true.

While I talked he looked repeatedly from me to the jug. And long before I finished he had taken the jug into his hammock and poured two more gourds of the liquor into him.

His skin flushed, and the veins on his temples began to stand out. The hammock, which had been as still as my chair, rocked a little under him at times. He had laid the revolver beside him and seemed to have forgotten it. His eyes were not so steady as they had been. Yet he was far from drunk.

"*Si*," he said when I finished. "But how is it that though the men of Yacu live far west of here, the messenger of Yacu came from the east? And how is it that you, a Portuguese, are a man of Yacu, who hates believers in the cross?"

My real reason for coming from the east, of course, was so that I could appear ignorant of the *assacu* tree and everything else on that *ygarapé*. But I had an answer ready.

"I came from the east because I passed south of here, then found water which I could not cross, and followed the water

north until I stumbled on a place of death where were bones and a hidden canoe. When I saw that no arms or legs were among those bones I felt sure that the men of the Jararaca had been there and that I was near the end of my long journey. So I took the canoe, came on down the water, and found the men of the Jararaca. And I am with Yacu because——"

I hesitated as if doubtful about telling him. Then I went on boldly:

"Because I have killed a priest. For that the slavish priest-worshipers hounded me into the jungle. A curse on them!"

I spat, looking as ugly as I could.

"*Si?*"

An evil grin flashed on his face, and he leaned forward.

"You killed a priest?"

"*Si.* I was drunk and sneered at him. He waved his cross and threatened me with damnation. So I sunk my machete in his fat belly and pulled upward."

I jerked my hand up as if doing that thing, and then made faces and clutching movements like a man disemboweled. And he laughed—a hideous hissing laugh that showed long yellow fang-teeth. The hammock swayed back and forth. The revolver slipped out and dropped. He did not notice its fall, or did not care.

"A killer of a priest!" he chuckled. "A ripper-up—so!"

And he jerked his hand as I had drawn mine.

"The messenger of Yacu and I are brothers! I too became a man of the jungle because I killed a priest. *Si*, a priest—and a woman. I slit both their throats—their throats wide open! Ha, ha, ha!

"Brother priest-killer, messenger of Yacu the cross-destroyer, you have done well to come to the Jararaca. I, the Son of the Snake, have destroyed all believers in the cross who have come into my hands. 'Who lives by the cross dies by the snake!' Such is the word of the men of the Jararaca.

"Our hunting has been to the east and south. Now it shall be to the west and north. Where the rubber gangs work, there shall the Jararaca strike. Where the rubber owners live, there shall the Son of the Snake leave only fire and death. I know their names, the numbers of their men, their locations. The nearest is one Nunes, two weeks' march from here. He dies first!"

XVIII

THE rum had loosened his tongue. He drank another gourdful, and the tongue grew still more loose. He was fired as much by my talk as by the strong liquor. Either of these alone might not have overcome his snaky cunning, but the two together swept him off his balance. Besides playing my part as well as I could in word and manner, I had worked on his three passions—pride, ambition, cruel hate. He wanted to believe all I said. The powerful rum both inflamed that desire and dulled his suspicions. For the time, at least, he believed in me. And, believing, he talked.

He told me the things I most desired to know. Of his past—whence he had come, how long he had been a jungle outcast, and other things of that sort—he said nothing further, and I asked no questions on those points. But of his men and his handling of them he told more than I had dared hope for.

He now had sixty-eight men. They fought with bows, spears, clubs, blowguns, but not with rifles. Some rifles were here, but bullets were too few and hard to get to make the guns useful as regular equipment, and the wild men were not trained in their use.

Yet, though armed only with savage weapons, they were organized along military lines. Each eight-man canoe had its regular crew, and each crew was headed by a *cabo*, or squad-leader. On land marches there was a *sargento* in charge of each twenty-four men. When a raid was made the attack was led by a fighting captain, who was responsible only to the Jararaca himself.

"Look on them, man of Yacu, and see what fierce fighting men are mine!" he boasted, rising and stepping a little unsteadily to the door. "Not Yacu himself with his thousand has better fighters, man for man, than these!"

As he lifted the bar and opened the door I walked over to it, and together we looked out on that brutal gang of his. Loudly he bragged of their savagery, pointing at one after another, while the *barbaros* watched us wooden-faced. And while he talked he did a thing which later was to become most valuable to me: he curled an arm around my shoulders to steady himself.

At the moment I had to fight down an

impulse to pull away from his snaky clutch and fall on him with my machete. Once before—when he told me my old *coronel* would be first to die—I had almost dropped my hand to my bush-knife; and now his touch nearly made me show my hatred for him.

But I remained quiet, realizing that to his followers he would seem to be hugging me in brotherly fashion. I even praised those evil-faced eaters of human flesh, saying the things he wanted to hear. And he stood there hanging to me and grinning with pride, flattery—and rum.

"Anta! Here!" he called.

A solid, small-eyed man with an ugly scar across his nose and another down his chest strode forward.

"My *capitán*," the Jararaca explained, nodding toward him. "The best fighter of all my men—so good that I let him lead all attacks. He has not the brain to plan—only I, the Son of the Snake, can prepare the plans for an assault that cannot fail—but when the order is issued he always carries it through without mistake. Would he not make an illustrious field general for Yacu—and for the Jararaca when Yacu is gone?"

To me the man Anta seemed hardly more than a merciless animal, but naturally I did not say so. Anta's stolid face did not change when I congratulated his master on having so mighty a warrior, and what thoughts passed in his bullet head I could not guess. But I could see that he noticed the slight lurching of the Jararaca and his hold on me. And this too was to help me later.

Suddenly tiring of looking at his men—or perhaps growing thirsty again—the chief stepped back, shut the door in Anta's face, barred it as before, and returned to his hammock. There, from boasting about his men, he went to telling of the strength of this hill of his.

The rear of his *forte*, I learned, was protected by wide swamps across which no man could pass—soft mud which would swallow anything stepping into it. The slippery front could not be climbed, the paths at the sides were guarded—there he broke off and took more liquor, after which he loudly declared that no men ever would dare attack this place, even if it had no guards at all. All the world feared the Jararaca. And he told why he was feared.

One tale after another of torture and butchery he related, until I ached to kill him. But I made no move, for I was here to learn all I could, and I should be a fool to stop his talk now. Whatever thought came into his head came out of his mouth. And among those thoughts were the attack he planned on Coronel Nunes, the man whom we had found dead at the *assacu*, and the gold cross which had hung on that man's neck.

His intention of destroying the rubber-workers and rubber-owners to the north and west of him had not sprung into his brain as the result of my tale of Yacu. He had been planning it ever since capturing a stray bush-tramp who now had been sent to find out whether crosses were of any use on the other side of death.

From this man, who had been kept as a slave for a time—and, no doubt, treated with all the cruelty this white devil could think of—had been gained information concerning all the rubber estates of the Javary region. And now, since it was unlucky to start an important expedition on a waning moon, he awaited only the coming of the next new moon before marching out against the *coronel* and others like him.

When I asked how he had put that slave to death, he boasted of his infernal idea of lashing men to the *assacu*, where they would hang in torment until killed by snakes which always were near that spot. He told of throwing *assacu* poison into the face of that man when angered by his refusal to tell something he knew. And he pointed to a covered gourd in a corner, which, he said, held more of that poison, ready for the next man who dared try to thwart his wishes.

The hanging of the cross on that man's neck, and on others before him, was a grisly joke. Whence the cross itself had come he did not say, but as he had told me he was a priest-killer it was not hard to guess that he had robbed some church. He laughed in a blood-chilling way as he told of the screams and curses of men on whose necks that cross had hung when the snakes crawled up and struck death into them; and I did not doubt that more than once he must have gone himself to that tree and, from the safety of a canoe lying out on the *ygarapé*, watched the deaths of such victims.

But while he gloated he suddenly scowled and cursed. He had thought of a thing that spoiled his pride in the tree of thorns.

Some demon, he said, had come to the *ygarapé* where the *assacu* stood. The demon had swallowed a whole *ubá* and its men, changed the last victim of the tree into a foul alligator, turned the gold cross into wood, and put around the place snakes which had no bodies and struck down his men. Out of three boatloads of men who had gone by night to see why the others did not return, eight had come back dying from snake-bite in the feet, although not one snake had been seen. And when other men had gone by day, they too had come back with the same tale and with four more victims of those unseen snakes.

This was the first I knew of a daylight visit to that tree by the *barbaros*. They must have gone there while I was away on a spying journey. I nearly grinned as I figured that by our fight to save Senhor Mack and by Pedro's trail of death we had killed nineteen of these cannibals. But I pretended to be much amazed and asked whether he himself had visited that spot to see what sort of demon might be there.

At that he suddenly grew silent. By his expression I knew he had not gone there, and that he was afraid to go. He scowled at me so hard that I wished I had left that question unasked.

Perhaps he suddenly realized that this was no tale for me to carry back to the mighty Yacu—that the Jararaca's power was being wrecked by a demon and his men destroyed by devil-snakes. Perhaps that is why he began glowering at my basket holding Matador, as if he realized also that the blue snake always is death to the *jararaca*. And perhaps those were the reasons why he did what he did.

At the time, of course, I did not follow his thoughts. I took things as they came. And soon they came fast.

His glance went to the barred door beyond which his men lurked. Then he looked at me, and from me to the rear wall of the room. His scowl faded, and a cunning look crossed his face. He poured another drink—a small one—swallowed it, and began talking fast, as if the rum had started his tongue again.

"But the Jararaca cares nothing for demons," he declared. "A few men more or less—what matters it? The Jararaca is still the Jararaca, whom neither men nor gods nor devils can overcome. *Si!* And the tree of the snakes has grown stale. The Son of the Snake has a better idea for the next cross-kissers who fall in his way. Messenger of Yacu, look upon a sight that shall delight the hearts of the Blue Snake people when you tell of it!"

Across the room he went to that rear wall. Looking at it more closely, I now noticed that in it was the shape of a door, across which a bar lay in place. Still talking, he lifted this bar.

"When the Jararaca and his men go out on the war-trail, with them shall go the thing which you now shall see. And all slaves of the cross who live through the fighting shall kiss the living sign of the Jararaca's power. *Si*, it shall be put against their lips! And the lips—how they will swell! Ha! Look!"

I was standing beside him now. Swiftly he swung the door open. Beyond was a small room, not more than six feet square, lighted by a small hole above. Expecting to see some infernal image, I looked across the place and found nothing. My glance dropped to the floor, and then I saw the thing.

Lying on the dirt, about to coil, was an immense *jararaca*.

"Say to your master, Yacu," hissed the Son of the Snake, "that the *jararaca* is more powerful than the accursed *mussurana!*"

With the words he moved like lightning. One hand darted at the machete in my belt. The other struck me hard in the back, shoving me straight at that deadly snake.

XIX

MY OWN quickness was what saved me. That, and my unconscious recoil from the snake.

If I had been standing flat-footed, or leaning the least bit forward, that violent push would have knocked me beyond the doorway, and a swift barring of the door would then have left me weaponless in a death-pen.

But the instant my eyes fell on that snake I drew back, and the blow of the Jararaca failed to throw me off balance. And the second his hands touched me my own hands flew out. One shot back and seized his wrist, stopping his attempt to disarm me. The other clutched the edge of the doorway, giving me a rigid support by which I could heave myself back. With all the power in

that arm I forced myself away from the snake's den, and in the same movement I whirled and swung that arm around his neck.

So, at the moment when he expected me to be a helpless prisoner at the mercy of a reptile that knows no mercy, he found me crushing him in a death-grapple.

With all my weight I forced his wrist down until the machete had sunk back into its sheath and his grasp on it was broken. Still holding that wrist, I loosed my arm-hold on his neck and got a throat-grip.

Those two holds I meant to keep, especially that on the throat; for by it I could choke off any outcry as well as his breath. Just beyond the farther wall his whole cannibal army waited, and if once they heard their master yell it would not take them long to batter down that barred door and make an end of me. And whatever might come to me, I wanted no help to come to the Jararaca until he was past help.

But getting that throat-hold and keeping it were two different matters. I was fully as heavy as he, and more muscular; but he was wiry and as quick and wriggly as the snake he seemed to be, and he showed the strength of sudden murderous fury and of a man crazed by rum.

I had looked before into the eyes of men trying to kill me, but never into such eyes as his. They glared like infernal fires. Whether or not he was wholly sane at ordinary times, he now was a maniac. And he fought like one.

Time and again he twisted out of my clutch. But each time I was on him again before he could reach a weapon or even cry out. And each time I got that grip on the throat and clamped my fingers deep into his flesh.

He got a hand to my own throat more than once, but I always managed to break his hold. He bit at me, and so snaky was his look that I felt if his teeth ever sank into me I should die of poison. But his yellow fangs never quite reached me. Neither did the long nails of his free hand ever reach my eyes, though he slashed viciously at them.

Writhing, wrestling, wrenching, we threw each other around the room, falling to the floor, heaving each other over, plunging up again to fight the harder on our feet. His face grew dark, his mouth gaped for air, but he fought on furiously. My breath came in gasps; I began to feel my hold on him weakening; and still I could not down him.

At length we stumbled and fell across the table. It upset, throwing us headlong on the floor. The shock broke our holds. Perhaps it dazed us a little too, or perhaps we were fought out. At any rate, we lay there a few seconds, both exhausted, neither moving, watching each other's eyes. I knew I ought to attack again at once, but somehow I felt numb. With the table-top at my back and the Jararaca in front of me I lay like a log, waiting for new strength.

Suddenly he started as if thorns had struck him. His slant eyes widened. Terror flashed across his face. A hoarse sound came from his mouth. Before it could grow into a howl I nipped his throat again and choked it off. I started to force him down, determined now to jam him to the floor and throttle him with both hands until he died.

But as my head rose I glimpsed something beyond him; a thing that disappeared into a blur for a second, then took shape again. At the same instant my enemy twitched once more. And the terror in his face became awful fear.

I dropped back, holding him now not as a foe but as a shield. Only his body was between me and death. And death already had struck him twice.

The big *jararaca* had crawled through the open doorway of its pen. It had coiled and struck. Its fangs had sunk into the back of that other Jararaca, its captor. It had coiled again and struck again. And it would keep on striking.

That venomous creature had in it poison enough to kill ten men. If its fangs should reach me as well as my enemy I too would be dead before sunset. The Son of the Snake was a dead man now—dead, though yet alive and dangerous. Before long he would be a corpse. And if he succeeded in breaking from me, or even in turning me over to take one stroke from that flat head—

If I had held him hard before, I crushed him now. He lunged, yanked, squirmed in frenzy, but I kept him between me and that awful thing beyond. He tried to scream, but I cut off all sound except a few low wheezes. And again and again he quivered suddenly, and I knew the snake had shot more poison into his back.

All at once he stopped struggling and went limp.

He was not dead, nor even in a faint. Yet he lay like a wet rag. He did not even jump to show that another death-stroke had come to him.

Slowly, very slowly, I lifted my head to see whether the snake had stopped and crawled away. Before my eyes had risen high enough to see I heard a confused sound—a noise of hisses and small struggle. I dodged back, lay listening a moment, then rose again. This time I saw what was beyond us.

Where the *jararaca* had been was now a squirming, struggling ball. It rocked, rolled slowly over. Out of it stuck the head and neck of the *jararaca*. The rest of it was a scaly, gleaming mass that shone like blue steel.

Matador, friend of man and foe of *jararacas*, was out of his basket. That basket had been knocked off the table when it fell. The *mussurana*, jarred awake and angry, had seen his enemy and attacked.

His enemy was big and fighting viciously; but its death was as sure as that of the man beside me. Even as I looked at them the blue head of Matador shot out and closed like steel nippers on the under jaw of the other serpent. The poison-snake was caught in a grip that never would loosen until its neck had been ground to fragments.

Then I looked down at the limp, motionless form of the Son of the Snake. Back to me came his words spoken as he had shoved me toward death. And with them came other words said before that.

"Son of the Snake," I said grimly, "you have said that the *jararaca* is mightier than the good blue snake. Look now on your mighty snake, helpless and doomed in the jaws of the *mussurana*!"

And I turned him over, holding a hand clamped over his mouth, and let him look.

"You have said also that 'who lives by the cross dies by the snake,'" I added. "Hear now this word—

"Who lives by the snake dies by the snake—and the cross shines on!"

He stared up at me, a strange horrid light in his eyes. He made no move. I lifted my hand from his mouth, holding it ready to smother any attempt to yell. But all he did was to gasp for air, breathing in hissing gulps.

I arose and dragged him around to the other side of the table, away from the snakes. He seemed unable to walk. He moved his arms and legs in a weak way, but he stayed limp. He reminded me of a snake with a broken back—the same venomous stare, the same useless movements. Never before nor since have I seen a snake-bitten man act as he did.

It may be that so many fierce bites in his back, so close to the heart—I counted seven wounds later on—had nearly paralyzed him. Perhaps the fangs had even pricked into his spinal cord. Or perhaps the poison and the sudden fearful knowledge of what had come to him caused some sort of stroke in his brain. I do not know. But I do know that he never spoke again. Nor did he ever again stand up like a man.

Beyond the table I dropped him. Bending over him, ready to strike if he tried to scream, I went on:

"*Si*, the cross shines on. The cross you hung in mockery on a tortured man sent to the poison-tree has struck you down. It led me here. It caused the deaths of your nineteen fellow-snakes on that *ygarapé*. It will cause the deaths of all the rest of your foul eaters of man-flesh. Even now men march through the jungle to destroy them—men of Coronel Nunes, my comrades, on whose lips you were to put the fangs of that *jararaca* which struck you in the back.

"I am no man of Yacu, the hater of the cross. There is no Yacu. There are no Blue Snake cannibals. I am a man of Coronel Nunes. And when you and all your tribe are only bones, scattered and forgotten in the jungle slime, the men of Coronel Nunes will travel this land and laugh loud and long at the tale of the Son of the Snake, who dreamed he could destroy the cross."

As before, he made no answer. He stared straight up, breathing in that hissing way. His eyes seemed fixed and glassy. When I moved my head aside his gaze did not follow me. I stood up, stood back from him; and still his eyes did not turn.

How long I stood there watching him, waiting for any word or movement, I do not know. No word came. But movements did. *Senhores*, he began to wriggle like a snake.

Queer slow serpentine movements started at his neck and went down his body to his feet. Gradually he turned on one side. Still wriggling, he worked himself over on

his stomach. He seemed to have forgotten that he had arms and legs. He turned himself only by squirming and working his muscles. And when he lay flat on his breast he began to crawl.

No, not as a man would crawl, using elbows and knees and feet. He tried to crawl as a snake would—by moving its muscles and worming from side to side. His arms dragged uselessly beside him. How he did it I do not know, but he did move forward a little. And as he went he held his head lifted—and he darted out his tongue.

I looked down at his back, swollen with poison. I looked at his snaky crawl, his darting tongue—and I felt cold. Though his body remained human, the thing inside it no longer was human—no, nor demon either. It was a snake, creeping on its belly—nothing more.

I touched its side with my foot. It curled around as if trying to go into a coil. It lashed with its teeth at me. I sprang back as if it were a snake in body as well as in mind. It lay there a few seconds in that twisted position. Then it straightened out. Its head dropped. It was still.

When I touched it again—this time with the point of my machete—it did not stir. When I pushed the head over and looked into the face I saw no life. No life was left.

The Jararaca, Son of the Snake, priest-murderer, woman-killer, torturer of Christians, who boasted that neither man nor God nor devil could overcome him, had passed out with his face in the dirt.

XX

A FEW feet away, the other *jararaca*—the real *jararaca* of the bush—also had met its death.

Its head already had disappeared into the jaws of Matador, who lay straight on the floor, his mouth wide, his neck bulging as he drew into himself the writhing body of his foe.

I looked from the good blue snake to the evil thing at my feet. Matador's enemy was dead, and so was mine. Now we both must return to the bush. But between us and safety waited nearly seventy man-eating savages.

I listened. It seemed that those savages ought to be tearing at the wall to get at me. But no sound came from the other room. I stepped to the door, put an ear to the crack, listened again, and heard only the voices of men grunting in casual talk.

The fight between me and the Son of the Snake, though fierce, had been quiet. I had fought silently, had let no sound escape from my enemy, and had kept him from striking the walls. The table, hitting on solid earth when it overturned, had made little noise. The men outside had no suspicion that all was not well with their chief. I might yet escape.

At once I began seeking a way out. I found none. No door, nor even a window, opened outward from this room or the den of the snake. Light came in from high wall-slits and roof-holes, but nowhere was any opening big enough for me to pass through. So I drew my machete and started to dig a hole under a wall of the snake-house, intending to tunnel under the palm-logs and creep out that way.

But I did not dig long. The plan was not good. There must be men around the house, and in broad daylight I should have scant chance of escape. To wait until night was out of the question, for before that time the cannibals would be uneasy about their master's long silence and suspicious because he did not eat. Something whispered to me that my best hope lay in boldness. A bold front had brought me into this place; it might get me out again.

So I put back the dirt I had dug. I barred the door of the pen. I stood the table where it had been before, placed the upset chair on its feet, laid the *atura* on it, and eyed Matador. He was coolly swallowing away, his bulge growing longer as the *jararaca* gradually shortened. I had half a mind to put the pair of them into the snake-house and leave them, but decided against it, for it seemed like abandoning a friend in the midst of enemies. If I succeeded in getting away he would go with me.

Turning from him, I lifted the dead man and laid him in his hammock. I turned his face toward the wall and arranged him so that he sprawled as if in drunken sleep. I picked up the revolver, shoved it into my right-hand pocket, and lifted the jug. Some rum still remained. I drank. Then I put the jug back on the ground beside the hammock, and near it I placed the gourd from which the Son of the Snake had drunk. After that I made up my pack again.

When that was done I walked all about

the room, looking carefully at everything to make sure that no sign of a conflict remained. Finding a jar of water in one corner, I washed the dirt and sweat of fight from myself. Then I put back into my hair the feathers which had been knocked out during the struggle. Last of all, I lifted the two snakes together and put them into the *atura*. Matador did not like it, for his meal was only half down. But I had given him all the time I could. Now we must get away as fast as possible.

Unbarring the door, I swung it partly open and slouched carelessly against it. The talk stopped. The savages all turned toward me. The ugly club-man, standing near, slipped forward and confronted me.

I gave him a glance, then straightened and looked past him until I found the scarred face of Anta. To him I raised a hand and beckoned. At once he came forward, shoving aside the club-man as he reached the door, and faced me with a cold stare.

"Anta," I said, "the mighty Jararaca sleeps."

With that I hiccoughed, staggered slightly, and grinned in a foolish way. Anta's eyes narrowed. He sniffed. He had caught the reek of rum on my breath—which was just what I wanted him to do.

"He sleeps," I repeated, with a drunken wink. "See."

And I stepped back.

He peered around the edge of the door. He saw the sprawling figure, the jug, and the gourd. He looked long at the jug, then up at his chief. I hiccoughed again and went on.

"The great Jararaca and his men now are the brothers of Yacu and the Blue Snake fighters. I go back to Yacu with his message of brotherhood. Soon, Anta, there will be work for us to do together. Much fighting.

"Now the Jararaca is tired from much talk. He orders that no man disturb him. Any man who does awake him will be sorry."

He nodded slightly. Probably he had seen more than one man made sorry for angering the chief. He himself did not think it wise, I noticed, to approach that hammock. It was well for him that he did not; for if he had I would have sent him after his master, even though I died the next instant under the weapons of his men.

"The Jararaca and I are comrades," I added in a boasting tone. "Did Anta see his chief lay an arm about my shoulders when the Jararaca told of the power of his men?"

He nodded again. He looked once more at the jug, then at me, swaying as if I had taken drink for drink with the Son of the Snake. I thought a grim smile showed in his eyes. Without turning, he moved a thumb toward the outer room and muttered—

"Walk straight."

Savage though he was, he was a good enough captain to wish his men to be ignorant of the drunkenness of the *commandante*. I straightened as if offended, replying—

"A man of Yacu always walks straight."

Quickly, yet without too much haste, I slung pack and basket and followed him out of the door. He softly shut it. Down the aisle we went side by side. In the middle of the room he stopped and grunted three names. Three men stepped forward. To these he gave the command that all be kept quiet. The three turned away and went among the others. They were the *sargentos*.

Without orders, eight men followed behind me and Anta. They trailed us to the door and outside, down the hill, and to the canoes. Still without orders, they manned an *ubá* and pushed it out. I got into the small canoe in which I had come, stowed my pack and basket, and took up the paddle.

"Farewell, Anta," I said. "Soon we shall meet again."

He grunted something. I shoved out. The *ubá* stroked beside me. Down the bay we swung to the lagoon. There the warboat stopped. With no further word I turned eastward and paddled off as if hastening away on my long back-trail to Yacu.

Not until I had reached the end of the lagoon and rounded the turn did I look back. I knew I was watched. As soon as the bush swung in between me and the *barbaros* I stopped paddling and got ashore, where I spied back to see whether I was followed. The *ubá* still floated at the mouth of the bay. Soon it drew back and was gone.

Back in my canoe, I paddled on for some distance. Then I turned into a bushy cove and again went ashore. There I would stay until dark, when I could sneak back to my

camp. And there I decided to let the blue snake go.

"Matador *meo*," I said as I opened his basket and slid him and his partly swallowed prey out on the ground, "I give you the best thing in life—freedom. Good hunting to you, *amigo!* May you live a thousand years and kill a *jararaca* every day."

Matador made the only answer he could. He gave a gulp, and another inch of *jararaca* slid out of sight.

XXI

AN HOUR after dark I was in my *tambo*. No sound had come from the *enseada* as I passed it, and I believed the secret of the Jararaca's sound sleep still was undiscovered. But I knew that soon after the next sunrise it would become known, and the noon must not find me here. The cannibals would comb the bush for me; and though most of them would go eastward, trying to find where I had gone ashore and then trail me on land, others might work westward and find traces which would lead them to this camp.

So, toiling by the dim light of a carefully concealed fire, I got together everything left behind by Pedro and made a new pack of food for myself. Then, with the gold crucifix hung around my neck, I got into my hammock and slept.

At dawn I was up and loading the canoe. A hasty breakfast, a pulling up of the poles of the *tambo*, and the camp was a camp no more. The mists had not yet burned away when I shoved out from shore and paddled swiftly away down the *ygarapé*.

At the end of the winding waterway I hid the canoe in one place and the spare equipment in another. Then I took the course by which Pedro and I had come southward and by which he and the blond American had gone back. Traveling light and fast, I pushed on all day without a pause to eat. And as I tramped, bending a little forward and naked to the belt-line, the cross swung from side to side before my chest as if it too were glad to get away from the accursed place I left behind.

Late in the day I halted suddenly. Not far ahead sounded the rustling, sloshing noise of men marching through a watery piece of bush. Low voices muttered. The sound was coming straight toward me. At once I slipped away from the trace and behind a tree, whence I watched with rifle ready. The men were marching fast. I had hardly concealed myself when the first moving form came into sight. Half a dozen more strides, and his face became clear. I lowered my gun. The leader was Pedro.

"*Alto lá!*" I called softly.

He halted so suddenly that he slipped. His gun-muzzle jumped at me. Then, as I stepped out, he dropped it and grinned.

"God bless your ugly face, old cannibal-lover!" he cried.

And as I came within arm's length he slapped my shoulder hard.

"How come you here so soon?" I asked. "I expected to have to wait days longer for you."

"We have traveled hard. We got ashore today. Look at the *bandidos* behind."

I was already looking at the "bandits," as he called them. Grim-faced, belted with cartridges, armed with rifles and machetes, all bearing solid packs, they surely looked ready for battle and sudden death. Yet all were *seringueiros* like ourselves; all friends of ours and men of the *coronel*.

Only the few nearest us could see me because of the thickness of the bush, but the word was being passed back. Grins and hearty low greetings came from the men close by, and farther back hands rose among the leaves and waved to me. I suddenly realized that all had feared they might not find me alive.

"How many?" I asked.

"Twenty-two. All we could find quickly."

"Twenty-two against sixty-eight," I muttered. "We should have more, but——"

"But these twenty-two are better than twice sixty-eight *barbaros*," he cut in. "And besides these men we have a trick in our bag. Indeed, I brought the men only to work the trick. Wait, old snake-eater, and see us blow those cannibals to ——!"

"Nothing would suit me better," I told him. "But where is the American *senhor*? I do not see him."

"He walks last."

He gave me a slight wink, and I understood. The American was guarding against any loafing at the rear. And Pedro had hardly spoken when a word came up the line. Grinning, the man behind Pedro reported—

"The North American asks if you are paralyzed, and if not, why are you spending the day here?"

We chuckled. And I said:

"He is right: we are losing time. Talking can wait. Twenty minutes' march from here is a dry place where we can make camp. Let us go."

So I turned back, leading the way, with the gold cross swaying now at the head of a band of straight-shooting, hard-stabbing *seringueiros* marching to storm the stronghold of those who mocked it.

An hour later we were in camp for the night. Shelters had been thrown together, hammocks slung, food eaten, pipes and cigarets lit. Around a good fire which we made no effort to hide—for there was little chance that the *barbaros* would find us there that night—my comrades squatted and listened while I stood and told of all that had passed since Pedro left. When I finished, the American sat scowling.

"Curse it!" he grumbled. "That slimy mutt was my meat. Not that I mourn his death—not much! But I wanted the satisfaction of cleaning up on him myself. Say, are you sure you didn't dream all this, Lourenço? It's a pretty tall story."

"*Senhor!*" Pedro cried hotly.

And others of my friends growled and looked sourly at Mack. I held up a hand and made my own answer.

"Perhaps it is a tall story, *senhor*. But if I dreamed, I picked this up while dreaming."

And I threw his revolver on the dirt before him.

"My gun!"

He pounced on it, peered at it, shook it as if rejoicing in the feel of it. Then he stood up.

"Old chap, I beg your pardon. You see I haven't known you very long, and— But I shouldn't have said it anyway."

"It is forgotten, *senhor*," I told him. "And do not feel cheated because the Jararaca died before you returned. There are sixty-eight other snake-men, and I think they will give you some action."

"Righto! And they're the ones who butchered my boys. Well, Pedro, I don't see that the situation is much changed.

"That bunch will be just as ready for a scrap as before, if not more so. What Lourenço tells us about the lay-out of the place changes things a bit, but your big idea still is perfectly good with a few variations. We'll have to tackle them on the water instead of in their fort, that's all."

"I think," I said, "that it is about time I was told about this big idea."

"And so you shall be," Pedro promised. "Do you remember that before we came away the *coronel* had decided to clear off a larger area around headquarters? And that he wanted stumps and all removed from the land?"

I blinked. Then I saw what he meant.

"*Por Deus!*" I said. "But how can we use that on the water?"

"Leave it to me," answered Senhor Mack. "Now come here and let's work out the details."

So, while the night life rioted around us and our fellow fighters took their ease, we made our battle plan. And when I went to my hammock I grinned. Pedro's boast, back on the trail, had been no empty threat. I was soon to see the cannibals blown to the hell where they were long overdue.

XXII

SOME delay was caused by the fact that we had to go after that war-canoe which we had hidden beyond the old camp of Senhor Mack. It meant another night trip and very careful paddling, for the savages now were savage indeed. Their drums thundered angrily through the darkness, and once we caught the dip of paddles and lay quiet a long time before continuing our groping journey. But we had to have that big boat, and we got it.

In the *ygarapé*, near the poison tree, where we felt sure the cannibals would not come because of their fear of the demon, we built over the bow of the *ubá* a tough woven basket-hood: a tight, rounded, strongly braced *toldo*, or cabin, which would stop arrows and stand firm before an air-shock that might tear away anything with a flat surface. This came well back from the bow, but protected the bow only. The rest of the canoe remained as it was.

When this was complete I added the last touch. With the toughest bush-cord I lashed to the front of that hood the gold cross. Our attack was to be in broad day, and I wanted the cross to flash in the sunshine as a maddening insult to the fiends facing it. That was my only thought in putting it there, but it was a good stroke. Some of the men, with more religion than I, felt that *Deus Padre* surely would fight

with us now. And even Senhor Mack spoke approval.

"Good hunch, Lourenço," he said. "In a way we're a bunch of crusaders. It won't hurt us any to fight under the sign of our faith, even if some of us aren't over-burdened with piety. For that matter, I reckon any of us is just as good as some of the old-time Crusaders were, if all the tales I've read are true."

At the first light of the next dawn the *ubá* and the small canoe filled with armed men. Down the *ygarapé* they went to the grassy point where the *lagoa* began. There all but two men got ashore and slipped away into the bush, heading for the point midway down the long curve of the *enseada* where the guarded path swung into the forest. Their task was to kill the guard silently and then lie low, watching the water, until the battle opened. After that they knew what to do.

The two paddlers brought back the war-boat, with the canoe trailing behind. Again the boats filled, and all our little army was on its way.

Reaching the lagoon, we pushed stealthily through the heavy mist to the mouth of the bay, where we floated to the tongue of land dividing the inner and outer waters. With hardly a sound our mates got ashore and disappeared. Like the men on the other shore, they went hunting the guard who patrolled the path. Leaving the small canoe there, the three of us who were left floated away into the fog, which now was thinning out.

Half of our fighting force now was on each shore of the *enseada*. When they took their positions they could rake the water with a cross-fire of heavy bullets. On the bay itself remained only three men in one boat—Pedro, Mack, and I. We had rifles, cartridges, and machetes. But those were not all. In a basket just inside the *toldo*, where they could be reached instantly, rested sticks of dynamite.

In each stick was a short fuse. In each fuse was a match. On the under side of the cabin roof was fastened a piece of sanded paper on which the matches could be lit with one twitch of the wrist. On the end of each stick, covering both fuse and match from dampness, was fitted a thin rubber cap. And as we stroked back toward the lagoon Senhor Mack held one of the sticks in his hand, waiting impatiently for the time to strip off its hood. We had to give our men on each shore time to reach their places, and also to await the vanishing of the fog from the water.

"Remember, now, you've got to hold her steady as a rock when I swing," the blond man warned. "Heaving from a boat isn't the same as working on solid ground. I'll use the regular bomber's throw—don't have to move my feet, except to turn on my right toe. But I've got to have firm footing. Once let me drop one of these babies and we'll go to hell in a handbasket. Steady's the word."

"Steady is the word, *senhor*," we echoed. And we paddled on, hugging the shore.

The mist disappeared. Bright sunlight blazed on the water. Anxiously we scanned the bush along the farther bank, but saw no sign of our mates. Then from that shore, well behind us, came a short sound; a noise like a man starting to yell but killed before his voice could gain power.

"There goes the guard," Mack muttered.

With the words he stripped the rubber hood from the stick he held. Then he knelt and drew other hoods from other sticks.

"All right, boys. Over the top. Let's go."

While he still worked at the basket, we swung out into the middle of the bay and started for the hill of the cannibals.

We made no haste, but we did not delay. With regular, powerful strokes we pushed along to the turn, beyond which we could get our first view of the hill. But when we reached that spot we wasted no time in looking at the stronghold of the *barbaros*. Something much nearer took our eyes—an *ubá* heading for the place where that yell had started.

The *ubá* was not full. Only five men were in it. Probably they had been near the boats and jumped into this one to go and see what the sound meant. I feared that our men hidden in the bush would shoot and spoil our plans. But they had level heads, and they held their fire, though their fingers must have itched on the triggers.

The savage canoe, already near the shore, halted as we swung into sight. It was not more than forty yards away. Its men hung on their paddles and stared at the cross blazing in the sun.

"Rifle work, lads," said Mack. "Get 'em."

We got them. Swerving easily, we

stopped our boat, picked up our rifles, and let drive. With the first belch of our guns two Indians slumped down; with the second, two more. The last man, howling something, stood up and tried to loose an arrow toward us, but it never left the bow. Our rifles barked together, and he flopped over and was gone.

"Guess that'll wake 'em up," the American said. "Yea, verily, I'll say so! Look at 'em come!"

Down at the boat-landing a boiling mass of men formed, rushing down from the hill and fighting to get into their own boats. Howls of rage came to us. An *ubá* swung out and started for us. Two more shot after it. And swiftly others crowded in the wake of the first three.

"Nine canoes," I counted. "Good! They are all here."

"They have seen that we are only three men," said Pedro. "Now they race to see who can kill us first."

"The first crew to get us eats us," I agreed.

Mack, grinning like a blond jaguar, swore and jeered the advancing cannibals.

"That's it; come on, you butchers! We're easy marks—perhaps! Come on and find out how it feels to have *your* arms and legs ripped off! *Yow-eeee!*"

His scream echoed down the water as he stooped to the basket.

"Give that first canoe some bullets!" he added. "Slow 'em up. Get 'em bunched. Then I'll hand 'em something."

We shot again—three shots each, fast. The leading boat swerved suddenly, two men pitching overboard. The *ubás* just behind it backed water, but one struck it. In a moment the war-boats were confused, trying to pass one another, dodging around, their speed broken. From them rose a flight of arrows which thudded into our *toldo* and plunked into the water around us.

"Here goes!" Mack snapped. "Steady!"

We brought the bow toward the *barbaros*, held it firm. A match flared. The blond man, standing straight, sidewise to the Indians, held his arms out like a cross. The left dropped, the right darted up, his body twisted at the waist. Up over the cabin, out over the water, a long stick of death rose, curved, dropped.

While we were still stretching our necks to watch it he was up with another match blazing. Another heave like the first; then he snapped—

"Duck!"

With the word he crouched under the *toldo*. We yanked our arms and paddles inboard, bent ourselves far down. An instant later the whole world seemed to explode.

A blow like that of a great ax swung by a giant struck our boat and knocked it backward. A smashing roar cracked our ears. Another blow—another roar. Then silence.

Slowly we straightened up, blinking at each other in a dazed way. Somewhere far off I heard screaming. And from a great distance Mack's voice came faintly.

"Great guns! Some kick in that nitro! I underestimated it. Can you hear me?"

I nodded, reached over the side, scooped a handful of water, and put it on the back of my neck. My deafness grew less. The screeching came louder. Waves rocked our boat, which had swung broadside to the cannibals. Looking toward our enemies, I found that many of them had disappeared.

Over there the water had turned red. Among the waves bobbed shattered *ubás*, smashed weapons, and things that looked like chunks of meat—small chunks. No screams came from that place; nothing was left there to scream. The cries came from farther back, where unbroken *ubás* still floated and savages held their heads as if blinded. Only in the last two canoes were men who still moved. And they were moving away as fast as they could, yelping louder than all the rest, fleeing for their hill.

Mack reached for another stick, hesitated, shook his head. Standing up, he roared:

"Fire! No quarter!"

Rifle-shots ripped out from both shores. The two fleeing canoes slowed. Their men toppled, fell forward or back, sprawled over the side. Little spurts of water shot suddenly upward, glittering in the sun. Bullets whined as they glanced off the surface, thumped solidly as they hit the war-boats. Very soon those boats were empty. The firing dwindled to a few pops.

But it swelled again to a crackling roar. The *barbaros* in the other boats had regained their senses, and some were plying their paddles while others sent arrows curving at the shores. None came at us. None wanted to face again the boat of the gold cross, from which had leaped crashing death. They fought only to get away. But none got far.

Our swift-shooting comrades in the bush

swept them with a hail through which no man could pass. A steady rip of gunfire sounded. Then it slackened and died. No living thing, except us three, floated on the *enseada*.

XXIII

A LONG yell of triumph rang back and forth from shore to shore. We began paddling again, moving toward the hill. Through the wreckage and the red water, past bullet-torn canoes filled with dead, and on to the boat-landing we pushed. Our comrades filed from the bush and joined us. Up the hill we trooped, alert to shoot down any enemy lurking there. But the hilltop was bare of life.

"This concludes the morning's entertainment," Senhor Mack said grimly. "Unless we use the rest of the dynamite on this fort. What say, gents?"

"That was what we brought it for," Pedro replied.

"True enough. Might as well use it up. There's a bunch of it left in camp. Send some of the boys after it. And have them bring plenty of fuse."

So we picked men to go back to camp in our *ubá* and bring up the rest of the explosive. Much dynamite had been packed in from headquarters, for Pedro's plan at first had been to plant it around the long house at night and blow house and cannibals to pieces all at once. The *seringueiros* who brought it had expected to do the work of planting the charges and, if the scheme failed, to do the usual bush-fighting with machete and gun. But when it was learned that the savages were always on guard the plan was changed to the one which we used.

"That cabin of ours was a life-saver," the American added. "Without it we'd have been knocked cold. But if you boys want to see a regular blowout wait until we touch off this shebang. And that reminds me.

"We'll go back to camp by water, and none of us wants to be on this hill when the fireworks blow. There are a couple of warboats lying idle down at the landing. Be sure you have paddles and everything ready for a quick getaway. Now let's look over this dump."

We went through the empty house, looking at everything and taking whatever was useful. In the room where the Jararaca and I had fought we found that the table had been shoved against the wall, and in the middle of the floor was a low mound of fresh earth.

"If you still doubt that the Son of the Snake is dead, *senhor*," I said, pointing to the mound, "you might dig here and see what you will find."

"Not me. What's buried can stay buried unless the dynamite spatters it around, which is more than likely. All the rest are accounted for anyway."

"Except Anta, the fighting captain," I remembered. "I did not see him today. And the *barbaros* attacked like a leaderless mob, each crew for itself."

"If your Anta was a stocky man with a scar on his chest and another across his nose," a man spoke up, "he is down in the bush with two spear-wounds in his back. He has been dead at least one day."

I stared. Then I understood. There was no doubt that the dead man was Anta—murdered by his own men after the death of the chief became known.

We turned away and left the place, each man carrying with him some cannibal weapon or ornament as a trophy. At the outer door Senhor Mack paused, eying some three-foot slabs of thin wood leaning against the wall.

"Hm! Guess I'll take that along as an unwilling contribution to science from the Son of the Snake," he said. "That's their bush telegraph I told you about. See? Each slab has a cord in it, and they hang four slabs in a sort of framework and then hang up the frame too, so there's no absorption by anything touching it. Then the guy with the bass-drum stick—there it is, down on the ground—whangs away on different slabs, getting a different tone from each. The sound will carry for miles. Wish I knew their code, but there's no chance of learning it now. Hullo, there comes the powder-boat."

Gathering up the sticks of talking wood, we went down the hill to meet the *ubá* returning with the dynamite. When we came up the hill again we bore sticks of a different kind—sticks of destruction.

Senhor Mack himself set the fuses, cutting them in different lengths, and directed the placing of the charges. When all were set he and Pedro went swiftly along with matches, while the rest of us took to the boats. Two *ubás* started off at once. Soon Pedro and Mack came loping down the hill

and scrambled into the third boat where the rest of us waited.

"Shove off!" Mack barked.

We shoved; and we kept on shoving. Not until we reached the turning point did we pause. There we held the boats and watched.

Suddenly a black mass heaved up from the jungle. A thunder-clap smashed the stillness. Torn pieces of wood and shapeless blobs of clay filled the sky. Fragments rained down into the waters of the *enseada*. A wave came rolling toward us, tossing the war-craft of the dead savages like chips. The cannibal hill was blown apart.

On the top of the wave we went out of that bay for the last time. Out on the lagoon we swung toward the *ygarapê*. But all at once Senhor Mack pointed back.

Swept free from shore by the wave, his little canoe was floating after us; the canoe he had used when his men were alive and loyally working for him.

"Turn back and get that boat," he demanded. "I'm going back to my camp and put up that cross for my boys."

"Let the canoe drift," said Pedro. "We will all go down there and give your men burial, and put up a bigger and better cross than you alone could make."

And it was done. Before we returned to our own camp the bones of Mack's men were under earth, each skull topped by a wooden crucifix; and a big cross towered above the spot where they had lived and laughed and fought and died. And when we reached the *assacu* tree we buried also the bones of the men who had perished there in torment and been kicked down the hill by the *barbaros*. When that was done, all the victims whom we could find had been laid away like men.

Then I looked at Pedro and Mack. And I said:

"Tomorrow, *senhor*, our ways part. You, of course, go back to headquarters with the other men. Pedro and I were sent to find new rubber, and we have not yet found it. So we go on."

But they both grinned.

"Guess we forgot to tell you what your boss said," Mack laughed. "He said that if you cleaned up this gang you'd be doing a much bigger job than merely finding rubber. He also said that unless you came straight back to headquarters to tell him the whole yarn you could consider yourself fired; and that if you did come back he would open a bottle of something smoother than the rum and ginger you took away. Oh, yes, he knows you swiped that jug. So you'd better come in."

"There can be only one answer to that, *senhor*," I smiled. "An order is an order. And an order to drink from the private stock of the *coronel* is not to be denied."

We turned toward the *ubá*. The gleam of the gold cross struck my eye. I looked up at the great grim *assacu*, from which we had cut away the foul alligator before we buried the bones.

"On this tree," I said, "we found the gold cross, hung in mockery on a victim of fiends. And on this tree I shall leave the cross, as a sign that the fiends have gone to their hell; and that though snakes may come and snakes may go, this place is safe for honest men."

So I took the cross from the arrow-studded *toldo* and knotted its chain hard around the head and handle of my *machadinha*. I cut big leaves from a near-by bush and held them before me as a shield against any flying drops of the poisonous sap of the *assacu*. And then, with all the power of my arm, I swung the hatchet, driving its head far into the tree.

Then we entered the *ubá*, pushed out, paddled to our camp, and began making up our packs for the return to headquarters.

Our work here was done. The gang of the Jararaca was gone. The jungle was safe. Among the wicked thorns of the poison tree, high over the heads of any *jararaca* or *surucucu* or other deadly thing which might crawl over the knoll when we were gone, shone the sign of the white man's rule; a golden token that here all was well, and that if at any future time it should not be well, we *seringueiros* were ready to return with lead and steel and make it so.

And now, with our grim work completed, we turned our thoughts from death and crosses to life and enjoyment, as is the way of men. And as we talked of what had passed we voiced only one regret. That was that nobody had been thoughtful enough to bring along another jug.

Vengeance

By Thomson Burtis

Author of "The Winning Chance," "A Big Night for Sleepy," etc.

HE LISTENED for a moment like some sneaking wild thing. His crafty eyes stabbed the gloom of the little room with quick glances that strove to detect the slightest sign of danger. Satisfied that all was well, he crossed to the window and cautiously drew the shade back far enough to give him an unimpeded view of Grogan's, directly across the narrow, ugly street. Dim street-lamps vainly tried to dissipate the murky blackness of the thoroughfare below.

With infinite pains he opened the window a few inches and raised the drawn curtain as much. He settled down on the floor, his small head on a level with the sill. He drew an ugly forty-five from his pocket and placed it carefully on the sill, ready to his hand. His preparations made, his small, unwinking eyes fixed themselves on the dimly glowing windows of Grogan's.

For the hundredth time he went over his preparations and a warm glow of satisfaction swept over his narrow-chested, stunted body with an effect of physical delight. The light eyes narrowed a trifle and the thin, gash-like mouth grew more cruel as he thought of "Dinky" Andrews, whom minute by minute he expected to appear from that close-shut door across the street.

Ever since the time when he had been caught double-crossing the gang on that Whitman deal, the life of "Snake" Sleeter had been a nightmare. Life itself had hung by a thread for days. For weeks he had been an outcast, a pariah, from even such pleasures as are open to a denizen of the New York underworld as low and as unimportant as he. And Dinky Andrews, aided and abetted by his chief lieutenant, "Sloppy" Brand, had been the leader in the systematic torture of Dinky's erstwhile henchman.

Sleeter's claw-like hand stroked the gun lovingly. All the yellow soul of him delighted in the thought of how ineffably complete and final his revenge would be.

His mind ranged back and forth over his carefully laid plans, striving to find some detail wherein he had slipped. For days he had played sick in his barren attic room down the street. Thin, hard-faced Em Smith, the landlady, who consumed a quart of whisky a day without showing the slightest change in her haggard face or death-like eyes, had known it, and had brought him food.

Late at night, two days before, he had sneaked across the intervening roof-tops and ascertained that one of his skeleton keys would fit this, Sloppy Brand's, room. As a final stroke of luck, he had come into possession of a forty-five, fully loaded, in a way that precluded the possibility of its being known that he had such a gun.

Ever since he had heard that Sloppy and his chief were at swords' points over Mamie Corbett, Sleeter had been nursing the idea in his heart and the whispered news that Sloppy was to be out on a job that night had given him the needed opportunity. And Dinky, as was his invariable custom when there was nothing special on the schedule, was at Grogan's.

Sleeter leaned forward slightly, his curiously animal-like face tensed and eager.

That huge, slightly stooped form was unmistakable. With a hand that trembled like a leaf he picked up the forty-five and slowly, with infinite pains, aimed. The street was quiet and almost deserted; a few frowsy children and a sprinkling of idling grown-ups being the only signs of life.

He fired. The great, hulking figure below spun and dropped to the pavement, reaching for a gun and then suddenly stiffening.

Almost before the shrieks of the onlookers reached his ears the gunman was at the door. He closed it softly. Like a shadowy wraith he sped up the few steps to the trap-door and was out on the roof. He slid the door to, and his stockinged feet made no noise as he crept along the inner edge of the house-top. He stopped for a moment to cache the gun far under the eaves, on the nails he had placed for that purpose. No one would ever find it there.

In a few seconds, over the crowded tenements, he had reached the opening that led to his own rooming-house. His heart beating exultantly, he entered, closed it and shot the bolt home. He slid swiftly down the narrow black hallway; no one was at home on that floor, he knew. It seemed as if Providence had set the scenes for him that night.

The gas light was flickering, as he had left it, in his dirty, barren room. Careless of the cigaret butts that littered the floor, he tiptoed to the slatternly bed, and in a flash had removed his trousers and socks, putting them in their accustomed place on the rickety chair. He carefully examined the socks to see whether there were any marks left on them that could possibly give him away. They were so dirty that there was nothing which could give any telltale evidence against him.

Downstairs he could hear excited calls and loud conversation. Heavy footsteps resounded from the wooden stairways. Down in the street he could hear the hum of a gathering crowd, the high-pitched call of a police whistle coming piercingly above the deep bass drone of the rapidly growing mob. A killing was an event—the killing of Dinky Andrews was more than an event.

In his ragged underclothes Sleeter went to the head of the narrow stairs. His room was not at the front of the house.

"What's the matter?" he called fretfully in his nasal, whining voice.

There was no answer. Apparently such few of the lodgers as had been in had gone below.

"What's the matter?" he yelled again, and from the second story down he heard Em's harsh voice call:

"Dink Andrews been croaked. Guess you ain't sorry, are yuh?"

"What? Who croaked 'im, Em?" called Sleeter, apparently beside himself with joy. His thin voice rose in a crescendo and cracked at the last word.

"Dunno. Get back in bed an' I'll find out soon's the bulls leave."

Snake crawled back to bed, his chinless, sallow face the setting for rat-like eyes that glowed with sinister joy. Now, if only Sloppy Brand, by some means or other, should be suspected, his triumph would be complete.

He crawled beneath the covers, drawing the tattered quilt close under his chin, and with the excited cries from the street below coming to his ears like some far symphony to remind him of his achievement, gave himself up to the exultant, gloating thoughts which swarmed in his warped mind.

THE reasons that impelled Sleeter to go into the army were many. In the first place his old haunts were practically tabu to him, and in addition he had a hunch that it would be distinctly unhealthy for him to stay in the vicinity of his former wanderings from the straight and narrow paths. A year's layoff would be excellent strategy.

He had had a taste of the army during the last few months of the war, and as luck would have it found that his niche was a very easy one to fill. In addition, he had managed to clean up a sizable roll by means of his wide knowledge of the ways of dice, aided by a large collection of loaded, filed and other varieties of made-to-order galloping dominoes.

To Snake Sleeter the idea of going to work was not only distasteful, but somehow or other the thought of pitting himself against the hard, cold world frightened him. As a cheap crook and gangster, the only life he had known for years, he was at home. He had no confidence in his ability to go straight for a few months, and buck the world "on his own." So the army beckoned like a lighthouse across a stormy sea; three meals a day, small but regular pay, not much to do and the chances of cleaning up much money in the payday crap games.

Recruiting Sergeant Hall had a shrewd suspicion of just about where Sleeter belonged in society, but when a man is rated according to the number, and not the class, of recruits he procures he is not liable to be particular. The recruiting drive for the Air Service was in full swing, and Sleeter found himself a private in that branch of the service, on his way to a Long Island field, with very little trouble.

As he had hoped, the police had figured that Dink Andrews had been shot from a window, and had noticed the open window in Sloppy Brand's room. Brand, who had pulled a job up-town that night, was grilled unmercifully. His feud with Andrews over the pert Mamie was known, and finally Brand was compelled to confess to a small robbery to clear himself from the greater crime of killing the gang leader.

He was in "stir" for two years, now, and invariably the thin, cruel face of Snake Sleeter lighted up with satisfaction as he mentally hugged the knowledge that one of his enemies was in prison as a result of the murder of the other one.

Sleeter himself had been caught in the dragnet, but of evidence there was none. He had laughed to himself through his grilling, and when he was finally released, grudgingly, had frankly told the bulls that he was going from those parts. He made his word good, to their pronounced satisfaction.

He was too wise to overplay his hand. For two months as a rookie he was the most irreproachable soldier in the outfit, until he overcame the prejudice generated by his sallow, shifty-eyed face far enough to be considered a suitable candidate for student at the Mechanics' School at Donovan Field, in Texas, where Air Service rookies are turned out as expert riggers, mechanics, electrical men, propeller makers, parachute instructors and other specialists incident to the complicated mechanical organization an air service requires.

Winter was coming on—Texas was warm and far from New York and the possible vengeance of Dink Andrews' pals, some of whom had a faint idea that perhaps by some unknown method Snake was responsible for their leader's death. Snake settled down at the Mechanics' School to put in as easy and lucrative a year as possible.

It was just a week after his arrival that he spoiled all chance he may have had to realize his ambitions.

The payday crap game was in full swing. Fifty men were standing around a huge open space on the floor. Sergeant Crisp squatted next to the wall to pick up the dice and hand them to the man shooting. Rules were that the dice must hit the wall, and that the sergeant should pick them up in every case. Crisp drew a cut of twenty-five cents on every five-dollar pot as his compensation for running the game and keeping it straight.

Crinkled bills were in heaps all around the big circle. "Come" bets, odds-on bets against fours, fives, nines and tens, and every other variety of wagering known to craps were in full swing. Snake's cold eyes glittered like sunlight on ice as he awaited his chance to shoot. In his pockets were several pairs of crooked dice, one pair the exact duplicate of the green, transparent, white-spotted dice used in the game.

"Shoot ten dollars," he called in his whining voice and threw a ten-dollar bill on the floor. As it was being covered and the other men arranged their bets his practised hands produced his own dice, the regular pair out of sight in his left hand.

"Show me seven, babies!" he whined, pleading as if his life depended upon it. Crisp's watchful eyes were on him, roving to the big seven that greeted the circle from the floor.

"Shoot the twenty!"

It was covered in a trice and another seven resolved itself from the spinning dice.

"Oh, let me get over, let me get over!" came Sleeter's high-pitched voice in an ecstasy of pleading as the forty dollars was covered. Two or three men who had been riding along on Sleeter's wave begged him loudly to do it again.

The crook's heart sank for a moment as with one of the bones showing a five, the other one tumbled slowly over the floor. Would anybody there be wise and observant enough to grow suspicious at the peculiar actions of the small cube, very apparent in the slow roll?

His light eyes shifted from face to face as he stooped for his money. They did not meet Crisp's. He was just picking up the money when the sergeant's harsh voice came like the crack of doom.

"Wait a minute, brother."

The lean, tanned non-com had shot craps from the Philippines to France—in Mexican gambling-houses and on the back streets

of San Francisco. He was suspicious of those dice and more suspicious of the furtive-looking Sleeter.

While the circle of gamblers looked on silently Crisp examined the dice and rolled them experimentally. Sleeter's heart sank as he watched the sergeant's practised hand spin the dice along the floor. They fell on seven as if magnetized. Another roll and the slowly tumbling dice clinched Crisp's suspicions.

"Empty your pockets, Sleeter," he said crisply.

"Aw, whatcha givin' us?" whined the gangster, his ferret-like face immobile except for the darting tongue that strove to moisten his dry lips.

"Empty your pockets, I said!"

"Keep yer —— money," returned Sleeter, and turned to go.

"No you don't, you crooked ——," and a burly corporal dragged him back into the open space. Unfriendly eyes glared at him from every side.

Before he could protest eager hands had stripped his pockets. The various pairs of dice were tested, and one by one thrown into the stove, which was piled with trash paper.

"And here's the original dice," stated Crisp, prying open the long thin fingers of Snake's left hand and producing the dice.

"Now, *hombre*, let this sink in—if you ever gamble a nickel on any kind of game in this outfit your name is mud and your carcass'll be about the same, plainly speakin'. Now, slope, you crooked little rat!"

Sleeter obeyed instructions, the taunts of the other men following him until he pretended to be asleep on his bunk, far over in the corner of the big barracks.

The jeers and outspoken contempt of the outfit were his portion from that day on. He no longer made any pretense of trying to do his work. He did just get by in the weekly examinations, but he was a surly, shirking trouble-maker.

It was three weeks later that Captain Adams, adjutant of the school, found three micrometers in Sleeter's trunk locker. These valuable little instruments had been missed from the airplane department, and an unexpected inspection was staged to find them. Sleeter drew a month in the guard-house and a stinging flood of words from the forceful captain that turned all the hatred the gunman felt for the world in general and toward Captain Adams in particular.

The captain did not like the pointed, cruel face nor the shifty eyes of the private, and mentally anathematized the fact that the school had to bother with such as Sleeter. The provost marshal reported trouble with Sleeter in the guard-house, and the adjutant made it his business to see that the refractory prisoner did his full share. Solitary confinement and double work were Sleeter's portion for the last two weeks of his stay in what he mentally cursed as "this army stir," and fed the hatred that burned in his twisted soul.

Finally his sentence was up. The captain forgot him, practically. Snake remembered.

Captain Everett E. Adams was a character and a type. Well over six feet tall, the effect of his height and breadth of shoulder reinforced by keen gray eyes and a determined jaw, he looked to be just what he was—a distinctly forceful personality. He was the kind of man that by inclination and ability seemed made to order for a military career.

Years before he had been a cadet at the Academy. Major Stratton, in command of the Mechanics' School from its inception, was one of his classmates. After three years at the well-known institution on the banks of the Hudson, Cadet E. E. Adams made up his mind that he desired to do something which was forbidden by the rules of the Academy. Characteristically, he did exactly what he wanted to do, and then beat the authorities to it by presenting his resignation.

Came the war, and Mr. Adams took a running dive into the chaotic maelstrom that represented the military establishment of the United States in those hectic days of 1917, and emerged to the surface a first Lieutenant. He struck out blithely and wormed his way through rank-clogged channels to a Captaincy in the Air Service.

Major Stratton, with lively memories of his erstwhile classmate's ability to achieve any object he might have in mind, pulled wires lustily and finally snared Captain Adams as his right-hand man in the difficult project of organizing and putting into operation what was probably the most important single element of the Air Service—the school to make airplane experts out of green material.

For a year they worked day and night, and

the fruit of their labors was the vast plant at Field One which week by week sent a steady stream of trained men to do the fundamental work without which an air service is an impossibility.

Captain Adams, with every detail of the school and its operation at his finger-tips, was like the human dynamo that energized the man-power. And despite the terse incisiveness of his words and the directness with which he made known his desires or his displeasure, bit by bit he grew in the regard of the men whom he constantly egged on to greater and greater efforts.

After a hectic ten minutes in some department, during which the vigorous adjutant had succeeded in finding twenty-seven separate and distinct things that were wrong and had provided the means for correcting them, officers and men would shake their heads, half-smiling as if unable to comprehend how the captain did so much in so little time, and then throw the clutch into high and work a little harder to live up to the job.

"Slim" Evans, known far and wide throughout the Air Service as the tallest pilot in captivity, had some small gift of making short statements which summed up briefly but accurately the prevalent idea regarding either a man or a situation.

"Here's the kind of a guy the cap'n is," he told a new officer one day. "I have been drunk with him, playing marbles on the floor of his quarters with olives, and next day when I went into his office I saluted and 'asked permission to speak to the adjutant —sir!' "

After the war the captain found a little more time to step forth into polo, the San Antonio Country Club, and divers other pursuits of a lighter nature. In the course of these meanderings a winsome Miss who had been discovered by many other flyers besides the captain came within his ken. He came, he saw, and was conquered, and a whirlwind courtship resulted a month later in an announcement by Judge and Mrs. Bellamy of the engagement of their daughter, Barbara, to Captain Everett Adams, of the Army Air Service.

IT WAS natural that the captain should be thinking of Barbara as he tramped briskly along the line of hangars that rimmed the eastern edge of Field One. The night was softly warm, and above the stars hung low like glowing jewels on a canopy of purple. He was making a tour of the guard in order to satisfy himself that the men were on the job. Al Johnson, engineer officer, was officer of the day but it was one of the captain's habits to have a first-hand knowledge of just what was going on in the Mechanics' School.

One by one the guards halted him. Often he kept on walking, to see what they would do. In various ways he tested their knowledge of guard duty, and found that except in minor details these rookie students had already become good soldiers.

Finally he reached the last post, down in the extreme corner of the field. To reach it he walked beneath an arc light, and then plunged into the deep shadow cast by the closely set storehouses of the school.

"Halt!" came the cry of the guard from considerable distance ahead, and there followed immediately the sharp crack of a pistol. The whine of the bullet past his head made him duck involuntarily with an oath of surprize.

"You —— fool, what are you doing?" he yelled furiously.

He plunged ahead until he saw before him a cowering, thin-chested figure which he recognized.

"So it's you, Sleeter," he said grimly. "Now what the —— d'you mean by shooting after one 'Halt,' and how do you happen to have cartridges in your gun?"

"I yelled halt three times," whined the soldier, his light eyes aflame with hate that the captain could not see in the darkness.

"You may possibly have whispered it, but you didn't yell it," stated the captain. "Now, how did you get ammunition for that gun?"

"It's the gun that was give to me," muttered Sleeter, his ever-moving eyes refusing to meet the officer's steady look.

"Give it to me."

Adams took the gun and ejected the bullet in the chamber. He slid the clip out, and removed the cartridges in it. Then he returned the gun to the guard.

"What's your eighth general order?"

Sleeter did not know. In fact, his ignorance of the fundamentals of guard duty was almost sublime in its completeness. The captain, still somewhat upset by his narrow escape from that bullet and exasperated by the sullen replies of Sleeter no less than his ignorance, proceeded to deliver an

extemporaneous but forceful lecture that Sleeter took quietly, eyes on the ground.

They did not lift until the captain's tall form was disappearing behind a building. Then the gash-like mouth was twisted into a bitter snarl and from it poured a stream of filthy curses.

"The next time I'll get 'im, —— 'im," he muttered, and returned to his seat alongside the storehouse, there to feed his hatred with a thousand plans for getting revenge on Captain Adams, Sergeant Crisp and one or two others who were helping to make his chosen path a hard and thorny one to travel.

The starlit night was powerless to affect the captain with its witchery as his long legs ate up the distance between Sleeter's post and the guard-house, a mile away on the northern edge of Field One. His mind was busy with the various facts that very possibly might be found in his recent narrow escape.

In the first place, the guards at the school were armed with only wooden night-sticks, similar to the police weapon, and unloaded guns. A few of the veteran men had loaded guns, but rookies were not trusted with them. It was a subterfuge which was strictly confidential, and swift and sure punishment awaited the soldier who mentioned the fact to any civilian. Sleeter should have had no ammunition in his gun.

Furthermore, despite the furtive guard's statement, the captain was certain that he had halted him only once, instead of three times, and the shot had followed so closely on the heels of the command as to be suspicious in itself.

There had been a lot of trouble with Sleeter, he reflected as he strode toward the lighted windows of the guard-house, and the man was of that sneaking, snake-like character that always arouses the dislike and, in many cases, loathing of others. There had been many men who had hated him during his army career, as was inevitable, thought the captain, but there had never been a one whom he felt would go to greater lengths to satisfy his hatred than that same soldier.

He passed by his roadster, which he had left in front of the guard-house, and walked into the provost marshal's office. Night Provost Sergeant Hall was there, and he promptly came to attention.

"Sit down, Hall. How many men on guard tonight have loaded guns?" demanded the adjutant tersely.

"Not a one, sir, except the non-commissioned officers in charge," replied the sergeant.

"Sure?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who inspects the guns to make sure?"

"I do, sir."

"Did you do it tonight?"

"Yes, sir. Every gun issued was absolutely empty, sir."

Hard-boiled Provost Sergeant Hall met the Captain's eyes without wavering and his answers were quick and sharp. He was one of the veterans of the school, and implicit confidence was to be placed in his word.

The captain lighted a cigaret and puffed at it thoughtfully.

"Well, continue to be careful, Hall," he said at length. "Some of these new men have no idea how to handle a gun and we don't want any accidents."

The sergeant looked at the captain with a question in his eyes.

"We've got a few here who wouldn't surprize me none if they knew how to handle one too good," he stated dryly.

"For instance?"

"Oh, no one special, sir," returned the sergeant hastily.

The captain grinned.

"Well, handling an empty gun may be out of their line, anyway," he said. "Good night, sergeant. You might tell Lieutenant Johnson when he makes his next inspection that I was around and found everything O. K. except Sleeter. He didn't know a —— thing. I'll have him start reporting to you for instruction, beginning tomorrow evening, until he knows his orders."

"There's a guy I don't like," said Hall confidentially. "He was a guest here for a month, you know."

"Yes, I sent him here," returned Captain Adams as he started for the door. "Good night again, sergeant."

"Night, sir."

As his little roadster swiftly covered the four miles to San Antonio the captain fully decided that Sleeter had deliberately tried to shoot him that night. Both his official positions—adjutant and summary court officer, were such that he was bound to have a certain number of enemies, but there was something mean and furtive about Sleeter

that made his enmity considerably more serious than the frank dislike of an upstanding man. The legal question involved in the shooting of a man by a guard always had been, and always would be, a difficult one, the captain reflected, and Sleeter would have had an excellent chance of getting off practically without serious punishment had his aim been good. All in all, it did not look well. With tightening lips the adjutant made up his mind that one Private Sleeter had better watch his step from that time on.

He succeeded in forgetting the unpleasant incident while at Barbara's home. In fact, that vivacious young woman was noted for her ability to make almost anybody forget everything but her charming self.

They were in the midst of deep planning regarding the furnishing of the quarters which they were to occupy at Donovan Field when Barbara suddenly laid down her pencil and fixed a pair of distracting brown eyes on her stalwart fiancé's tanned face.

"Everett Adams, there's something you've got to do for me," she announced.

"Says which?" asked the captain smilingly.

"You've simply got to take me for a ride!"

"The roadster awaits without, fair maiden. If—"

"Who's speaking of automobiles?" returned Barbara scornfully. "I mean in an airplane."

"Can't be did, Bab," replied Adams decisively.

"Don't say that to me!" retorted Barbara, taking an unfair advantage by coming very close to him. "May Sadler had a ride today and I want one!"

"So May had a ride, did she?" asked the captain quizzically. "Well, that's the advantage of being engaged to a wild young shavetail who cares not a hang for regulations and can take a chance on being caught."

"And you are talking about 'wild' people," jeered Barbara. "Please, dear, take me up, won't you?"

"It's like this," said the harassed Adams, looking down into the brown eyes upturned to him. "If I wasn't sort of second in command of the school I'd take a chance, but the very fact that I'm over the rest of them makes it obligatory on me to be especially careful. If I did that and it got noised around, what could I say if every officer and man under me broke all the regulations there are?"

"I suppose you're right," she pouted. "I wish I'd fallen in love with a private. I——"

"There's a way it could be done—maybe," the captain told her as a solution presented itself to him. "Your father is a pretty good friend of the Secretary of War, isn't he?"

"Yes indeed. They write each other all the time."

"Why don't you get the judge to write to him and get special permission for a ride? Then you can go up out on the field, have all your jealous friends there to see it, and——"

"Daddy! Listen to me!" and Barbara was into the next room, there to perch on the arm of her father's chair and override the objections of her conservative parents with a high hand. When the captain left that night the gray-haired judge had finally decided that not only would permission be requested for Barbara, but for himself as well.

"I hope when you get old you'll have more sense than he has," remarked his future mother-in-law to the captain as he left. "No wonder Barbara is dying to do such a crazy thing."

"I wouldn't gamble a cent that mother won't be sore as a pup if I fail to get permission for her, too," chuckled the judge.

"He's even using slang in his old age," sighed Mrs. Bellamy with twinkling eyes.

THE next morning Private Sleeter received orders to report to the adjutant at ten o'clock. He was there promptly, saluting as he entered the office without once allowing his shifty eyes to meet the captain's cold gaze. Sleeter was frightened, and his eyes darted here and there as if he expected a trap of some kind.

"Sleeter, you will report to Sergeant Hall, at the provost marshal's office, every evening at seven until you satisfy me that you are thoroughly familiar with the Manual of Interior Guard Duty," stated the captain. "Any time you believe yourself to be in shape for an examination, let me know."

The gangster did not raise his eyes, but his heart lightened within him. He had been horribly afraid that his attempt on the

captain's life the night before was to be the subject of the interview.

"Another thing, Sleeter."

For just a second the soldier's eyes met the adjutant's level regard. Stark fear was in them, but only for a moment before Adams' words came slowly.

"Your record here has been rotten, so we're not sending you to an outfit when you graduate next week. You'll stay here until you prove yourself worthy of the trust that must be put in a mechanic on the line."

The sharp, sallow face of the soldier did not change, nor did his eyes lift from the floor.

"Lecturin' me for m' own good, the big stiff," he was thinking.

"You'd better turn over a new leaf, Sleeter," were the captain's final words. "You'll find you'll get no further. That's all."

Sleeter turned and started for the door.

"Wait a minute!" snapped the captain. "Don't you know enough to salute?"

Sleeter turned, saluted quickly, and disappeared through the door.

One week later he was before the captain again, this time for refusing to obey an order of Sergeant Correll. Furthermore, he had notified Correll that as far as he, Sleeter, was personally concerned the sergeant could go to ——. Correll's ordinary method of handling insubordination was to remove his insignia of rank and pound the fear of God and Sergeant Correll into the recalcitrant one's hide. In Sleeter's case, however, the sergeant was so much bigger that his self-respect would not permit him to use his customary method, so he preferred charges against him and Lieutenant "Sleepy" Spears, officer in charge of the Airplane Department, made out the necessary papers.

"The guard-house doesn't seem to have done you much good, Sleeter," remarked the captain after Correll had testified. "So we'll see what two-thirds of your pay for three months will do. That's your sentence—a fine of two-thirds of your pay beginning next pay-day, and lasting three months."

Two weeks later Snake Sleeter ran across something that made his eyes glitter and filled his mind with swarming thoughts. Being adjudged unworthy of any assignment which had to do with a mechanic's work, he was used as an orderly in the airplane department, under the watchful eyes of Lieutenant Spears and Sergeant Correll. As orderly his duties were to act as courier between headquarters and the airplane department, making a certain number of trips each day at specified times, and in addition running errands at the behest of his superiors.

He was in the habit of stopping along the way and rigidly scanning the correspondence he carried, merely on the chance of finding out something which might be twisted to suit his needs.

This particular day he was carrying a large mass of papers from the adjutant's office down to his own department. There was an approval by Major Stratton of a cross-country trip for Lieutenant Spears; a voluminous mass of endorsements—thirty-two of them—attached to a communication having to do with the shortage of one undershirt in the effects of a man who had been sent to France three years before. The supply officer had forwarded a request for stoppage against the soldier's pay to make up the item, and the correspondence had crossed the sea three times without being settled.

Reports returned for correction—orders from Donovan Field Headquarters—and then Sleeter scanned the next communication eagerly. It was from the Secretary of War, endorsed down through department, field and school headquarters to Lieutenant Spears and it contained permission for Mr. Bellamy and his daughter to take an airplane ride in a government ship. Captain Adams had written on it in pencil:

"Hurry my ship up, Spears, because I want to take them up day after tomorrow, and I want to use my own ship.—E. E. A."

As he walked slowly down the road toward the airplane hangars Sleeter was a changed man. The pointed, chinless face was cruel and the eyes were filled with a crafty gleam that indicated the trend of his thoughts. That fine of two-thirds of his pay was the worst punishment the captain could have given him—there were only three months of his enlistment left and he was planning a descent on his former haunts.

His capital, low at the best, would be still more reduced now, and in addition he was on duty as orderly instead of mechanic, which deprived him of the extra pay which a mechanic draws for flying duty.

His hatred for the adjutant, vicious enough even before that last appearance

before summary court, was now an all-consuming flame that gave to the cowardly, sneaking gangster the courage and craft of a cornered rat. As he entered the office his mind was made up—just the details of what he would do had not been decided, but the general plan had leaped into his mind and filled him with exultant satisfaction at the revenge it promised.

Captain Adams' special ship, a powerful, fully streamlined De Haviland, was in the airplane department temporarily for a little special doping and painting. It would be possible to have it finished in two days and Sleeter listened eagerly while Spears called up the adjutant and informed him that his ship would be ready for its work.

"The paint will just about be dry by the time you want to take it up, captain," Spears said over the phone. "Maybe you'd better let us gas and oil it up here and take the folks up without the ship going to the engineer department first. It would be a shame to have them spoil the painting before it gets dry."

"All right. Have Correll make it his special business to see that the ship is in perfect condition, will you? I'd sure hate to have anything go wrong with it."

"Very well, sir."

Spears hung up and turned to Sergeant Correll, formerly of the engineer department and now chief non-com of the airplane division.

"The captain is going to take up his fiancée and her father day after tomorrow—Thursday. I told him that his ship would be ready and in order to make sure that the paint is all right we're going to keep it here until he goes up. See to it that she's gassed, oiled and thoroughly inspected, will you? Stay right with it until the show's over."

"O. K., lieutenant."

Sleeter slipped out into the hangar. Once again, as had happened before in his little account with Dink Andrews and Sloppy Brand, luck was to be with him. His task was twice as easy with the ship in the airplane department hangars as it would have been had it been kept in its rightful place down in the engineering section.

THE next night an undersized figure slipped out of the shadows and hastily fitted a key to the lock of the office door. Sleeter had a key, because as orderly he had to arrive before anybody else and sweep out the office. The guard was around the corner of the second hangar down. Not a soul had seen him.

From his pocket he took a small flashlight, and picked his way from the office out into the hangar, and down to the captain's ship. There it stood, black fuselage and orange wings, spick and span from nose to tail-skid.

Without making a sound Sleeter slid across the hangar to a closet where he had cached a small saw. Having secured this he climbed into the front cockpit, set his flashlight so that it would burn steadily, and started to work.

The wooden control stick of a ship is set in an iron socket, which is attached to a small walking-beam. The stick controls both elevators, which control the fore-and-aft stability of a ship, and the wing ailerons, which control the lateral stability. Thus the stick is responsible for the climbing, diving and banking of the plane.

Sleeter started to saw from the front of the stick as close as he could get to the top of the iron socket. In a moment he had sawed it almost through, leaving only a thin strip of wood unsawed. That strip would be strong enough to hold when the ship was handled smoothly, but a sudden bank or zoom—any quick strain except a push forward on it, would cause it to crack and break. The cut, being even with the top of the socket, was practically unnoticeable. To make assurance doubly sure he got a small brush and some shellac, which he daubed thickly on the cut. It hardened in a thick scum around the top of the socket. The thin gash was safe from detection.

He was aflame with ghoulish satisfaction as he carefully replaced his tools and softly made his way through the pitch-dark hangar toward the office. On the take-off the stick would not break—the strain would be forward on the stick to keep the tail up. It would even stand a casual test. Not until the stick was pulled back fairly sharply would the uncut wood-fibres part.

The socket being filled with the stump of the stick, there would be no opportunity to replace the control, as is possible when the stick works loose from the socket. The ship would either nose-dive or else stall and spin into the ground.

Once again he would have paid off a debt, without the slightest chance of detection.

The wreck would be complete—probably would burn, besides. The cause of it would never be known.

THURSDAY afternoon was warm and clear, a few stately clouds moving majestically across the sky. The captain was glad they were there. Diving and zooming and banking close to those snowy piles of mist would be an unforgettable experience for his guests.

"Is she warmed up, sergeant?" he asked Correll, who was busily making a final inspection of wires, cotter-keys and safety wiring.

"Yes, sir, and running like a top. Looks nice, doesn't she?"

"Sure does," agreed the captain, surveying the big, gleaming orange-and-black plane with satisfaction.

He watched the many ships shooting around in the sky while Correll finished his inspection. The sergeant climbed into the cockpit and gave the controls a last look. Everything seemed all right. He took the stick and worked it sideways to test the aileron action.

Why he pulled back on it so sharply he did not know—it was a totally thoughtless action. He turned in his seat to watch the elevators, and jerked the stick back quickly.

There was a crack and the stick came off in his hands.

With his heavy face like a thunder-cloud he looked at the end of the stick and a bitter curse came slowly from his suddenly ashen lips as he saw the unmistakable signs of sawed wood. For a moment the husky sergeant felt weak, and then he beckoned to the captain. No other men were near, and he hid the broken stick in the cockpit.

The captain set his foot in the little step on the lower longeron, and pulled himself up until his head stuck over the side of the cockpit.

"Here's what somebody did to you, captain," stated Correll, moistening his lips with a tongue that was almost as dry. In choked sentences he told Adams what had happened.

As he talked the captain's face became terrible. The gray eyes were pools of such devastating, all-pervading wrath that the sergeant involuntarily dropped his own, and could not force himself to look at his superior officer again.

When he had finished the captain had not spoken. In that moment he could have watched the man who had sawed that stick torn limb from limb—could have tortured him with his bare hands—and laughed. When he spoke, his words were clipped and decisive, his voice slightly hoarse.

"I suspect Sleeter. Where is he?"

"In the hangar, sir."

"Tell Lieutenant Spears to report to me at once. Then change this stick without letting a soul know of it. Then, together with Lieutenant Spears, you will bring Sleeter out here."

The smile on the captain's lips was like the grin of a wolf closing on its prey. As he strode back and forth while Correll silently changed the stick, the tall flyer's brain was almost reeling at the thought of the death that had so nearly overtaken Barbara or her father, with Mrs. Bellamy and either her husband or her daughter watching the plummet-like fall and the ensuing horror of the mangled, probably burning body of the third member of the family.

"Did you want me, sir?"

Adams whirled to confront the easily lounging figure of Sleepy Spears.

"Spears, some sneaking fiend sawed the stick of my ship—the one I'm going to take Barbara and Judge Bellamy up in. Correll discovered it. As soon as he finishes replacing the stick you and Correll order Sleeter to report out here and you come along with him. When I give the word, boost him into that rear cockpit and strap him. If he gives himself away, have three M.P.'s here when I get down."

A thousand questions were on Spear's tongue, but the blazing, almost maniacal eyes of the captain did not encourage him to ask any of them. In a moment Correll's simple job was finished and without another person on the field, save the captain and Spears, having any knowledge of it.

"Leave the sawed stick in the cockpit," ordered the captain.

He adjusted his helmet and goggles while he awaited the advent of Sleeter.

The soldier appeared in a moment, his little rat-eyes darting here and there—everywhere but on the captain's face. He was trembling with the fear that his crime had been discovered and yet he could not believe it possible.

The captain was smiling. It was not a pleasant smile.

"Sleeter, I'm going on a little test flight

of my ship. I guess you don't get much chance to ride and your work has been a little—er—better lately, so I'm going to take you for a little hop."

Stark, naked fear was in the eyes of the sallow gunman and he shrank as if from a blow. He strove to speak and could not.

Triumphant satisfaction flamed in the captain's eyes.

"Come on, hop in!" he rasped suddenly, unable to contain himself longer.

"I—I—don't want to——"

The captain jerked his head back toward the ship.

"Start it, Correll."

Three mechanics came up from the bench and Correll crawled into the cockpit.

"So you don't want to, eh?" sneered the captain. "You're a —— of an Air Service man."

Sleeter's face was a sickly green. How could he get out of it without confessing what he had done?

"I—I don't feel well——"

The motor caught as the mechanics swung the propeller, and its roar drowned the barely audible whisper of the trapped gangster.

"You're just scared!" roared the captain above the motor's noise. Correll had it almost wide open for a moment—its previous warming had made it unnecessary to go through the process of gradual opening of the throttle this time. In a few seconds it dropped back to idling and the sergeant hopped out.

"You know, Sleeter, you scared me when you shot at me that time you were on guard. Now I'm going to loop you a few times and scare you. Come on man, be a man for the love of Heaven. You're standing there shaking like a leaf. I'm going to cure you of that fear right now. You'll never be an Air Service man until you learn flying."

He signaled Correll and Spears. With dozens of thunderstruck mechanics watching and laughing wonderingly, Sleeter was siezed and thrown into the rear cockpit like a sack of oats. With Spears' hand over his mouth the murderer's desperately lunging form was strapped in securely. The roar of the motor on full throttle drowned Sleeter's scream of deadly terror as Spears released him and jumped just as the captain took off.

Adams took off from the line. He grinned at his passenger. If ever there was a face which mirrored fear so absolute that its victim was literally helpless in its grip, it was Sleeter's. The soldier was gripping the cowling so hard that the blood from his finger-tips stained it, and his face was dripping with sweat.

Straight to five thousand feet, directly over Donovan Field. For those moments the captain was almost unconscious of what he was doing. Dancing ever before his eyes was the picture of Barbara, a broken, mangled thing on the ground below. Not once did he look to make sure that oil and air and r.p.m. were correct, or that the voltmeter was charging. He left the motor wide open, turning seventeen-fifty and in six minutes they were a mile high, far above the clouds.

The captain looked around and signaled a barrel-roll with his hand. For a delicious ten seconds he gloated at the sight of the shuddering body and terribly contorted face behind him. He was careless of the regulation forbidding that De Havilands be stunted; he knew that his special ship would stand the strain of what he proposed to do. Sleeter's lips parted in what was probably a scream of terror.

With a last lingering look at Sleeter he jerked back on the stick and applied full rudder. He did not want to roll, however. The nose came up and then fell. The great ship twisted into a terrific vertical tail-spin; wires screaming, fuselage shaking as the De Haviland spun toward the ground so far below with such speed as only a thousand pounds of motor made possible.

The captain cut the throttle only halfway, and with the earth flashing past in a drunken whirl he raised the sawed-off stick that had been left in the cockpit. He turned toward Sleeter, whose face registered the fear of death. He moved his lips as if yelling something.

The spinning earth rushed up to meet them with sickening speed. Sleeter's eyes were the eyes of a maniac, his face a drawn mask of horror. The captain looked back only once.

Four thousand feet he let the man behind him grovel and scream with the dread of the crash and then he pulled out. At six hundred feet the ship was level again. He flew for a moment to allow the heaving earth to present a stationary horizon to his dizzied eyes and then dived sharply for the ground. He landed close to the line. As he taxied up he noticed three blue armbands there. The M. P.'s were waiting.

Adams idled his ship calmly, running out the gas. When the propeller stopped he snapped off the switches, noticing that the Bellamys' car was coming up the road in front of the hangars.

"Take him to the guard-house. It'll be life for you, Sleeter!"

But Sleeter did not hear. The M. P.'s lifted his undersized body from the rear seat. They could not catch what the gibbering lips were mumbling, but occasionally the body stiffened in the grip of the horror that welled up from sub-conscious depths, even in his swoon.

"Just give the ship a little going over to make sure that spin didn't loosen it, Correll, while I talk to the folks. Then I'll take them up."

The small crowd of curious, eagerly whispering men parted to allow him to approach the big car which held the Bellamys and some friends. The madness had faded from the gray eyes, however, and it was almost his own smile that greeted Barbara and her guests.

"We'll be going up in a minute, folks," he said, shaking hands with the occupants of the car. "I've just been sort of trying things out the last few minutes."

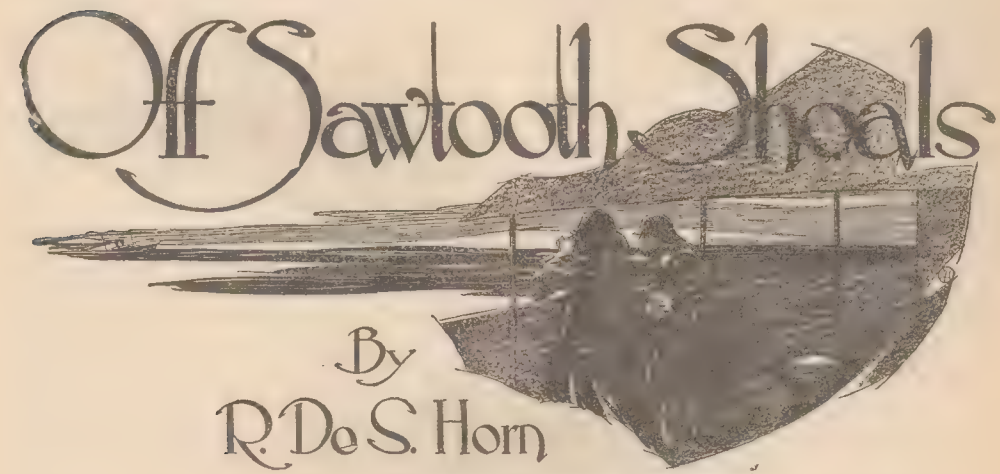
"That tail-spin was awful, Everett. You shouldn't do such things!" Barbara told him. "I wouldn't have been a passenger that time for——"

"Nor I. No monkey-shines, young man," put in the judge.

"I won't," promised Captain Adams. "There's been enough monkey business today."

Which was the nearest the Bellamys ever came to knowing that Snake Sleeter even existed. When he had regained his sanity and was told how completely he had verified the captain's suspicions, together with a few judicious lies about what he had confessed in his delirium and how he had been seen entering the hangar the night he was on guard, a full confession followed—for Sleeter was a broken man.

Two months later, he was graduated from the Donovan Field guard-house to Leavenworth, where he is a permanent resident.



Author of "When the Storm Flags Flutter."

ON THE bridge of the Coast Guard cutter *Sagamore*, racing along through the smiling morning, Captain Halloran lowered his glasses with evident irritation. His eyes were a-squint from their long vigil at the binoculars.

"Blest if I can see anything, Bishop," he complained querulously to the lieutenant beside him. "I may be getting old, but I thought my eyesight was still pretty fair. What can you make out?"

"Nothing—" The lieutenant, who was acting as officer of the deck, lowered the brass-bound quartermaster's glass with which he had also been sweeping the sea. "No, sir," he continued with conviction. "There isn't anything there!"

"*Off Sawtooth Shoals*," *copyright, 1921, by R. De S. Horn.*

"Humph! Let me see that signal again——"

Obediently the officer of the deck reached inside the tiny chart desk and brought forth a yellow radiogram form which he handed over. The *Sagamore's* skipper scanned it closely.

"Latitude 25—40 North; Longitude 79—45 West," he repeated.

"Well, if we haven't swept every inch inside of fifty miles of that spot then I'm a shivering liar!"

"Don't suppose the current could have set her over enou—," began the lieutenant; but his captain broke in rudely:

"Not fifty miles in five hours, it couldn't. Hell Gate itself don't run any faster than that!"

"Then maybe she's already gone down," offered the lieutenant. "That might explain it—'specially since she had a fire aboard. She might have blown up suddenly with all hands."

"That might have explained it if she'd been a tramp instead of a yacht," accepted the captain caustically. "But you never saw one of these brass-polishing clean-laundered yacht crews that wouldn't shove off hours in advance if they thought there was any chance of an explosion happening. Why we'd 'a' been picking 'em up hours ago! And even if she had gone down sudden there'd have been smoke in the air or wreckage of some sort or other floating around where we couldn't miss it on a day like this. Just take a look at that sea out there, will you?"

There was an impatient snarl in the captain's voice. The lieutenant turned and swept the horizon with a quick but observing eye.

It was a cloudless, glittering, morning and the sunlight was pouring prodigally down on a sea that for smoothness and blueness would have lost nothing in comparison with the far-famed Bay of Naples itself. Sea and sky met each other on the far horizon in one encircling faultless line. The long low swells that trooped monotonously in, rank on rank, from the hidden eastern seas were solid banks of unruffled blue. And although aft, at the *Sagamore's* flagstaff, the ship's ensign fluttered in an apparently glorious breeze, it was all due to the *Sagamore's* forced speed of seventeen knots.

The officer of the deck concluded his inspection with a puzzled shake of the head.

"It gets me," he confessed. "Looks kinda funny when you think of it, don't it?"

"*Funny?*"

The commanding officer repeated the word in a high-pitched note that gave promise of an impending explosion. But if such an explosion had been in his intentions he suddenly changed his mind. Very abruptly he turned away to the local chart that was spread out on the chart desk for the convenience of the officer of the deck at sea. Across this chart there was already a series of zigzag penciled lines representing the courses and distances that had been covered by the cutter in her morning's steaming.

To these zigzag lines the captain added one other, short and black and straight. By a swift piece of necromancy with the parallel rulers he performed the feat of picking up this line and carrying it over to the compass-rose in the corner for comparison. Then he completed the job by writing the findings down on the real line he had drawn on the chart.

"There, Mr. Bishop: there's your new course—312 true. We're going to abandon this search here and now and run back to Palm City. Drop your speed to twelve knots going in. And let me know when we pick up Orange Point Light."

And hastily stuffing the yellow radio blank into his pocket the *Sagamore's* captain turned to the ladder leading below. A moment later the officer of the deck could hear the clump of his feet as his hard leather heels fell solidly upon the ladder treads.

The *Sagamore's* skipper was retiring to his cabin in no amiable mood. The more he puzzled over the matter the grouchier he became. And the first thing that he did after the *Sagamore* had rounded Orange Point and dropped its hook into the harbor mud was to step into his gig and order the cox'n to ferry him expeditiously over to the Customs Pier. On the second floor of the dingy yellow Customs Building he brushed boldly past a line of scowling civilians and entered the private office of the district inspector.

THE inspector looked up as he entered.

"Well, Halloran, I see you're back again. Where've you been all night, anyway?"

"Oh, knocking around for my health; giving the old boat a whiff of the brine."

The captain's tone was breezy and unconcerned, but his eyes rested momentarily on the blond head of the inspector's stenographer who was waiting near by with pencil poised over her dictation note-book. The inspector nodded ever so slightly.

"Er—that will do for the present, Miss Kinsey. I'll finish that Fort Pierce memorandum and the rest of those letters in the morning. You may go for the day, if you choose."

Then when the door had clicked shut behind the blonde stenographer's back, he turned to his visitor again.

"I think she's all right, but still there's no use taking chances—especially if it's anything particular. What's the trouble this time, captain? But here: pull up that chair and then light up before you begin, if it's a long story."

The coast guard captain accepted the chair but waved away the cigar that the inspector offered.

"No, thanks. But you go ahead and light up, if it'll help you think any better."

"Why? Anything the trouble with the *Sagamore?*" inquired the inspector, flipping out the match and dropping it into a brass ash-tray already heaped high with black match-ends.

"No; there's nothing wrong with the *Sagamore*. It's just something mighty funny that we're getting over our radio," announced the captain. "I'm beginning to think there's something behind it, though, and I can't figure out exactly what."

"Something funny over your radio? You mean code signals—or what?"

The *Sagamore's* captain dug into his pocketbook and drew out two yellow slips which he unfolded and passed across the desk to the inspector. "That's two *S. O. S.* signals that we've got over our radio in the last fifteen days.

"The first one came in about two weeks ago when we were at Jupiter Inlet. It was a hurry call from a ship that said she was the Shipping Board Steamer *Alamo*, knocking herself to pieces on Planter's Key——wanted help in a hurry. Well, we rushed down there as fast as we could travel; but when we got there we couldn't find a sign of her."

"Couldn't find a sign of her?"

"Not a sign. And a destroyer that came over from Key West couldn't find anything of her either. We left the destroyer still looking for her on the chance that she'd missed her reckoning or the radio had garbled the position."

"And you never heard any more of her? You don't think she could have got off and gone on again before you came up?"

"Well, it's possible, but it ain't probable. Besides if he had he'd have sent out another 'broadcast' letting everybody know."

"He might have forgotten to do that, maybe."

The *Sagamore's* captain laughed sarcastically.

"A sailor forget to wireless that he's all right, after having sent out an *S. O. S.?* Never in your life! He knows everybody in reach is hurrying toward him and he's bound to save 'em the trouble and overtime if he don't need 'em any longer. Only thing that 'ud keep him from doing it would be a busted radio outfit."

"Well, maybe that's what happened then," speculated the inspector.

He took up the two yellow blanks and examined them closely.

"Now what about this other one?" he asked.

"Why, that's the one we got last night. You'll notice it's an *S. O. S* from a ship on fire about seventy miles east of here. After we left you yesterday morning we dropped on down the coast. We were at Biscayne when we got the signal—and it only took us about seven hours to get out to the position it gave. But when we did—well, it was the same thing over again."

"You mean you didn't find this one either? You mean you got out there and found——"

"Not a darn thing in sight! And after searching all morning we still hadn't found anything—not even so much as a floating timber or grating."

"Well—that is funny," admitted the inspector thoughtfully. "Now taken separately either one of these things might have been a legitimate accident; but two together—that's different. What's your idea of the thing?"

"There isn't but one explanation as far as I can see: there's some —— fool amateur over in the State somewhere, with a fairly strong radio set—and he thinks it's a darn good joke to stir up excitement with these fake *S. O. S.* calls. He'll change his mind

mighty quick, though, when the authorities get hold of him."

"Yes—sounds reasonable enough," conceded the inspector reflectively. "But how do you figure out 'over in the State' somewhere—instead of along the coast, for instance?"

"Huh; that's easy," returned the *Sagamore's* captain confidently. "Anybody that's ever been to sea or ever been around the sea even, knows what *S. O. S.* signals are and how much depends on keeping them honest; and he'd have sense enough to leave 'em alone. But you take some fool amateur inland—all he's thinking of is what a darn good joke it is on the ships and the newspaper-men. And any fool can pick out a latitude and a longitude on a geography map."

"Yeah-h-h, I guess you're right——"

But the inspector's tones did not sound very positive. He blew a large smoke ring toward the ceiling and followed the whirling puff with reflective eyes. Suddenly he leaned forward and pressed his thumb down on one of the buttons on his desk.

THROUGH the side door that opened in prompt response a thin-faced bespectacled clerk peered in.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Yes, Dixon. I want this month's records brought in: communications, cables, reports—everything from the first on up."

"Yes, sir."

The side door swung to, only to readmit him a second later with a huge black volume which he deposited carefully on the desk in front of the inspector. When he had withdrawn and the side door had closed again the inspector turned to the *Sagamore's* captain.

"I've got an idea— Let's see the dates on those radios for a minute, will you?"

"One on the third, received at 10 A.M. The other received at 11:20 last night," responded the captain, passing them over.

"Uh-huh. Now let's see—"

The inspector opened the big volume and began to flutter the leaves rapidly. Then he slowed down and began to run his finger carefully up and down the pages.

"March second: Biscayne—Fort Pierce—New Smyrna—St. Augustine— Nothing there. March third—same. March fourth—

"Ah, here's something. Letter from our man at Fernandina—

"Reported big cargo run ashore last night at Nassau Sound.

"That would be the night of the third. Now where did you say you were on the night of the third, Halloran?"

"On our way down to Planter's Key, to look for the *Alamo*. We left St. Augustine Inlet early that morning heading north, and were turned around by this *Alamo* message."

"And so you turned around and came back south instead. Good enough. Now let's see today's report."

And again the inspector flipped the leaves.

"Uh-huh. I guess this is the one—from the sheriff at Allendale:

"Caught automobile with big load whisky trying to slip around into Dixie Highway early today. Rumors of big landing in lower Biscayne last night. Am keeping good lookout for rest of load in case they try to bring it through here."

The inspector paused and looked at the captain.

"Now do you get the idea? You and the *Sagamore* were too near for safety, in both cases. So they merely called you away in the opposite direction— See?"

"You mean they called me out on a faked *S. O. S.*—so they could have the road clear for landing smuggled whisky?" demanded the *Sagamore's* captain amazedly.

"That's my idea. It's the booze-smugglers, and no amateur operator, in my opinion. In fact I wouldn't be much surprized if those distress calls came from the very ship that was landing the cargo—although they made precious sure to give you a position a good distance away in the opposite direction."

"Signals from a ship? Oh, no."

The *Sagamore's* captain shook his head incredulously. "There ain't no sailor afloat 'ud be low-down enough to tamper with *S. O. S.* signals; takes a German U-boat skipper to pull that trick. No, you may be right about them being fake calls to get us out of the way, but if they are you can bet they never came from any ship's aerials. Men that go to sea know too blamed well what an *S. O. S.* may mean, to go tampering with it."

"Maybe so," acknowledged the inspector.

"But you don't know these rum-runners. They aren't men; they're just rats. Bad as the Germans, any day. They'll shoot a sheriff down quicker'n a flash and I don't believe they'd hesitate long on wrecking a ship, even, if it came down to that. Distress signals and other people's wrecks don't mean anything to them alongside of money. And at present prices, a good boatload of whisky safely landed means anywhere up in the hundred-thousands to them. And they don't care for money at all—oh, no; not a bit!"

"Well—I'd just like to catch one of 'em once, tampering with the *S. O. S.!*" asserted the *Sagamore's* captain with a snarl. "The low-down sneakin' son of a pirate! What I'd do to him would be a-plenty!" Jumping out of his chair the captain clenched his fists and strode up and down fiercely for a moment or two. Suddenly he stopped short in his tracks, turned to the desk, banged his fist down on it heavily, and glared at the inspector.

"Well—I'm a son-of-a-gun! Why didn't I think of that sooner? Say—you've got long-distance connections with all the shore stations from here, haven't you?"

"Sure thing—you can get any of 'em on this phone right here."

The inspector grabbed the instrument off his desk.

"Who do you want—and I'll get 'em for you right now—?"

"Well, I want Key West Naval Station first thing," announced the coast guard captain promptly.

And while the long-distance connection was being put through he plunged into details:

"These amateurs or smugglers or pirates, whichever they are, may be smart; but they've slipped up on just one thing! They've forgotten, or else they never knew, that an instrument was invented during the war to locate the direction radio signals were coming from. It's called the 'radio compass,' and it can tell the direction within a single degree or so. Now one of these compasses by itself wouldn't be much use, because the sending ship might be anywhere along on the line of direction—anywhere between the compass and the other side of creation!

"You'd be lucky if you could guess the exact spot within a thousand miles. But when two or three separate compasses start keeping tabs on the same ship, and each of 'em gets her on a particular line of position, why it's just like putting your finger down on her! The ship's got to be on each separate line, ain't she? Then the only place she can be, and be on all those different lines, is the one single spot where they all meet! Why it's so accurate they're using it for navigation, nowadays!"

The inspector opened his eyes wide, and then his mouth.

"You mean you can find out where this ship is, that way? And then run her down? Well, I swear! But hold on—you haven't got any radio compass on the *Sagamore*, have you?"

"No. *We* haven't got any radio compass," retorted the *Sagamore's* captain briskly, "but the Key West Station has! And there's another one at Jupiter Inlet. And we could even call on Guantanamo to help us if necessary. What I want to do is to get Key West and Jupiter and Guantanamo all working together on these *S.O.S.* calls the next time they come in. Key West can get the direction lines from the other stations by wireless, plot them out on his own chart, and then let me know the 'fix' he gets for the sending ship's actual position. It'll all be done in code, of course; and then I'll be on this fellow's neck before he even knows anything's begun to happen!"

For a second the inspector continued to stare foolishly. Then he jumped up with a wide comprehensive grin and held out his hand.

"Shake, you — you darned *Sherlock Holmes!*" he exclaimed admiringly. "And, by George, I'll see to it myself that Key West comes in for her part of the deal!"

But the inspector's influence was not at all necessary to obtain Key West's cooperation. The Key West destroyer had come back from Planter's Key a very worn-out, disgusted destroyer, and the Key West commandant was more than willing to assist the *Sagamore* in her scheme, if by so doing he could even it up for the *Alamo* business.

He readily agreed to obtain the cooperation of Guantanamo and Jupiter Inlet as well, and to furnish the *Sagamore* with all the plotted positions as quickly as they could be run out on the chart. All that would remain for the *Sagamore* to do would be to run over to the position indicated, nab

the signal-sending ship and haul her in to port for stern retribution. With all details of the plot thoroughly worked out, everybody sat down to wait for the opportunity to put it into operation.

But unfortunately, like all deep-laid schemes, it seemed that now everything was in readiness the opportunity was going to fail to materialize. First one week and then another dragged by, with nothing uncommon occurring to disturb the *Sagamore's* routine. She ran down to her coaling station and coaled; she lay in port and drowsed at anchor; or she did her regular bit of cruising up and down the coast: in fact she led the regular life of any revenue cutter anywhere.

Only down in her stuffy little radio room was there any indication of anything unusual occurring or expected to occur. There the operator on duty, bending over his set with the head-piece clamped to his head and the code-book lying close at hand, jiggled the wave-meter and strained his ears a great deal more than was required by normal conditions of radio traffic.

STILL nothing happened. The amateur, if it was an amateur, apparently had either become surfeited with practical jokes or else had acquired sudden wisdom. If it was a rum smuggler he had become just as taciturn for similar or more insidious reasons. And the *Sagamore's* captain, returning from a derelict hunt off Savannah, dropped into the district inspector's office with dissatisfaction writ all over his weather-beaten countenance.

"Nope—nothing happened at all!" he growled, in answer to the inspector's query. "That's just the —— of it, though; the minute you get all ready to nab these practical jokers, why they quit playing! What's been happening around here lately—anything much?"

"No; nothing of the sort you mean," returned the inspector, hiding a grin by bowing his head and digging around in the wire tray on his desk. "But here's something of another sort might interest you—just came in a few minutes ago, or you'd probably have gotten it from your own set before you left the ship."

Very slowly the *Sagamore's* captain read the details of the storm-warning that had been handed to him by the inspector. And with every word his face grew a little bit more wrathful.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed in disgust as he finished. "Are we due for another one of them things?"

The inspector's facial expression got beyond control.

"What's the matter—you subject to sea-sickness?" he demanded, grinning widely.

"Sea-sickness?" Captain Halloran snorted. "No; but I hate like the dickens to spend about fifty hours straight on the bridge—and that's what any of these *gusters* is liable to mean! Sometimes I think they ought to call us the 'fishermen savers,' instead of the coasts guards! What with fishermen and yachts and Atlantic-Gulf-Pacific coasters, there's always some ship ready to get blown up on some of these million odd keys around here and——"

"Oh, you get out of my office, you old grouch," broke in the inspector, with pretended severity. "And don't you come back until the weather and your temper have cleared up a bit. I hope you have a nice rough time of it out at sea, darn you! And say——"

But the office door had already closed on the back of Captain Halloran hastily retreating to the dock and the protection of his own cabin.

With the early afternoon the accuracy of the weather-man's prediction became more and more apparent.

The sand spits that ordinarily showed above water for half a mile or so beyond the entrance points disappeared beneath a curtain of frothing white, as the storm-rollers, ranging far ahead of the storm that caused them, began to curl and crash up and over them.

Like frightened chicks running for shelter at the first rain-drops, the coasting craft began to stream into port. A dozen fishing boats, cranky and wet, chugged past the *Sagamore's* anchorage with crews grinning gleefully at their white-faced patrons who had gone out to catch a mackerel and had pulled in a storm instead.

A brace of ugly, shapeless vegetable-carrying schooners scudded in under reefed sails with their auxiliary engines *put-putting* earnestly. And behind them sneaked in a couple of immaculate brass-trimmed pleasure cruisers, rolling their sleek bows sulkily as if in pique at the upstart element that had presumed to thwart their imperious

pleasure. And as they swept past, the unkempt crews of the vegetable boats stopped their sail-furling long enough to jeer impolitely.

On the *Sagamore* all hands were securing ship for sea. Life-Saver, Aid-Dispenser and Patrolman Extraordinary of Uncle Samuel's seas, she was used to doing her cruising when all the rest of the world was scurrying homeward. And like a knowing vessel she was stripping for the coming storm-battle. Fires were sliced, life-boats made ready, ports and hatch-covers dogged down and both gangways hoisted in. Then like a beagle on a leash she tugged at her cable, straining at the iron links, impatient for the call to come.

It was not long in coming.

Captain Halloran, clambering to the bridge where Lieutenant Bishop as acting executive officer was superintending the test-outs, was tagged at the very top of the ladder by a radio room messenger pursuing him with the familiar lemon-colored blank. As the captain read, his lips began to compress themselves into a straight narrow line.

"Call all hands, Mr. Bishop! And up anchor! We're getting under way at once!"

And without waiting for the lieutenant's answering, "Aye, aye, sir," the captain turned and clattered below to his cabin. When he reappeared on the bridge a bit later he was clad in oilskins and sou'wester, and his square-jawed weather-tanned face was a-fire with energy. In his hand he carried a slip of paper he had brought up from the chart-house below.

"Steer 177 when you clear the outer buoy," he directed. "And get that 'Jupiter-to-Key-West' chart up here in the chart desk. There's a steamer chewing herself up on the Sawtooth."

"Sawtooth Shoals?—That's a ten-hour run. We'll make it just a little before daylight," calculated the lieutenant swiftly. "That's a nasty place for a man to get caught—five miles in to the beach and a rotten surf all the way, in a blow like this."

"Yeah—and then when we get there we may find it's all a lie," grunted the skipper. "But ——! Even if there were a hundred fakes we'd have to keep going out just the same, on the chance of even one of 'em being an honest call! Have they sent that code through to Key West yet?"

The lieutenant nodded as he grabbed up his megaphone to hail the fo'csle. Lieutenant Wingate, whose regular turn it was as officer of the deck but who was several years junior, had wisely retired to a place immediately behind the helmsman where he checked courses and in general held himself ready for any duty that might come his way. As the *Sagamore* rounded the outer buoy and swung off toward the south, the acting executive officer busied himself with the piloting and his other duties while the skipper tramped up and down from bridge-wing to bridge-wing, scowling over his thoughts. But he broke into open profanity when the radio messenger handed him another signal form an hour later.

"—— it to ——!" he roared. "Another one of those fakes! And chasing us out in a sea like this when we might be needed elsewhere! Bring her about and head her north again, Bishop, while I'm figuring the next course!"

While the captain worked over the chart in the little chart desk, the acting executive read the signal that had aroused the skipper's wrath. It was from the Key West Station and had the Navy-Code symbol at the top. He read:

> Can't get Guantanamo. And Jupiter reports compass out of order. Key West compass shows sending-ship bearing on a line thirty-nine degrees true. And telegraph message from Hookerstown says no ship ashore on Sawtooth Shoals. Will fix position accurately for you when we can get Jupiter and Guantanamo compasses working.

"All right. Make your new course five true," broke in the skipper, poking his head out of the chart-cupboard for a moment. "And where's that messenger?"

"Here, sir!" reported the messenger approaching on the jump.

"How about that *S. O. S.?* Call still coming in?"

"Yes, sir. She stops every now and then like she was listenin' in, but she always starts up again in fifteen or twenty minutes."

"All right. Keep talking to her and tell her we're coming right along. And let me know what she's doing—not every signal, but just every now and then. But you bring those Key West signals up to me just as fast as you can get them decoded!"

With a salute the messenger made for the ladder again. The *Sagamore* plunged sturdily on at standard speed while the wind howled and the waters roared. Nonchalantly the skipper dug into his inner

blouse-pocket, hauled out a cigar, and ducked his head under the chart-desk weather-flap while he lighted it.

Half an hour later the messenger's head again popped over the bridge beading.

"Sawtooth steamer is still sending—the same old thing," he announced tersely.

"Well, let him splutter," responded the *Sagamore's* captain grimly. "We'll keep a-chugging on up north, and if Jupiter and Key West ever get to working together on this fellow we may be able to spring a surprize on him, first thing he knows."

FOR the next two hours things continued the same. The *Sagamore* kept "a-chugging" and the wind kept a-blowing, although it was evident that the greater part of its force was sweeping by to eastward. To the surprize of Lieutenant Bishop they made no change of course off Palm City but continued on northward. Upon receiving the report that Orange Point Light was bearing broad abeam, the captain merely nodded and went ahead with the coffee and sandwiches he had ordered served on the bridge.

Seven bells sounded. And almost on the stroke the radio messenger popped up on the bridge again. The captain held out his hand for the radiogram with unmistakable alacrity.

"Another one from Key West, eh? No, by George!" he exclaimed as he glanced at the signal. "This is the real thing this time! Hey, Bishop—change course forty-five to the left until I can make out the new course exactly!"

"Forty-five to the left? Aye-aye, sir—Left fifteen degrees rudder, quartermaster. New course three hundred and eighteen."

"No—make it three hundred and ten true!" shouted the captain from the chart-board. "He's aground on Triangle Shoals!"

"Aye-aye, sir— Make that course three hundred and sixteen," interpreted the lieutenant to the helmsman after applying the correction from the correction board near the compass.

Then he turned to the captain at the chart-board.

"Did you say 'Triangle Shoals,' sir?"

"Yes—there's a yacht just gone aground there. He says his boats are already smashed and he can't stick it out till night. Ring up 'reserve speed' on the telegraph, and then get the port life-boat ready!"

"Aye-aye, sir. I'll send Mr. Wingate—No, by Heaven, I'll go myself!"

And leaving the bridge to the captain and the regular officer-of-the-deck, Lieutenant Bishop made his way hastily aft. The *Sagamore* had already poked her nose in toward the low-lying coast and by the time Bishop returned to the bridge to report the life-boat ready the captain was swinging the cutter cautiously in toward the white water.

"There she is—right on the point of the Triangle," he announced, lowering his binoculars as the lieutenant came up. "She's getting it, too—every other one's going clean over her. You've got to be careful, Bishop. You'll have to get in her lee and at the same time dodge the floating timbers. Under her bow or quarter will be best——"

"I'll try her quarter first, sir. And I'm all ready to shove off when you give the word, sir."

"Well, I'll try to get in a bit closer yet. Then I'll swing her up and give you a lee—What is it, messenger?"

For the ubiquitous radio man had presented himself again.

"Key West is trying to get us, sir; but our detector is getting poor—the chief says he'll have to put a new bulb in. But he says he'll send the message up just as soon as he gets it."

"——! Never mind Key West and that Sawtooth affair now— I'm too busy with this real one out here! You tell the chief he can send me the Key West information up when this job is finished and the boat is all hoisted in again; I haven't got time to bother with it now. Is that Sawtooth liar still sending, by the way?"

"No, sir. He quit just before this Triangle ship began and he hasn't sent any since."

"Well, that's one bit of decency he's shown, anyway—giving this other fellow a clear track," rejoined the skipper. "Precious lot of good it would have done, though, if we'd kept on down to Sawtooth like we started. It would have taken us all night to have gotten back to this fellow at the very earliest, and there wouldn't have been enough of him left by then to hold a funeral over, even!"

And with a profane grunt the skipper turned about his business of conning ship.

"One-third speed on the engines!" he

sang out. "Right fifteen degrees rudder!—All right, Mr. Bishop, you can let go now whenever you're ready!"

"I'll be in the water just as quick as she slows down a little," promised the lieutenant, jumping for the ladder.

Three minutes later, while the *Sagamore* interposed her rolling hulk between the life-boat and the heavy seas, the little craft with its brawny crew dropped into the water. With its oars pulling strongly but with short choppy strokes on account of the surges the life-boat made in toward the wreck. For a while it appeared and disappeared with clock-like precision as it rode the heaving combers.

But when it entered the stretch of white water near the wave-swept yacht it dropped out of sight for minutes at a time before rising into view again, and even the signal-quartermaster's strong glass could not pick her out at such times from the churning boiling surf. One last glimpse the watchers had of her just before she reached the wrecked ship. Then ten—fifteen—twenty minutes passed without a sign of her anywhere. The signal-quartermaster asserted that he could see moving figures on the wrecked hulk at intervals when the surf dropped its spray curtain, but the lower-powered binoculars of the officers revealed nothing. Again the slow minutes dragged.

Suddenly the quartermaster, perched precariously in a corner of the bridge railing, dropped his glasses.

"'S all right! Here they are, sir! Here they are!" he yelled.

"Where?" demanded the captain with evident relief. "Where?—"

"About one-third the way out—there on a line just astern of the wreck," defined the quartermaster, pointing with his finger. And following his directions the officers on the bridge caught sight of the black splotch momentarily topping the crest.

Slowly but surely the stout little boat made her way out through the heavy seas, bucking and plunging, but riding the waves sturdily. By the time she was near enough alongside to catch the lines thrown from the *Sagamore's* rail the captain was waiting at the sea-ladder that had been thrown over the side.

In the bow and stern of the life-boat were a number of passengers, some of whom were busily bailing between crests. In the stern-sheets Lieutenant Bishop, handling the tiller, looked up with a grin on his spray-swept countenance.

"Got 'em all?" bawled the skipper as the wave-soaked passengers began to crawl up the side.

"No, sir. Got another load to bring out yet, sir!" returned the lieutenant vociferously.

"Then wait a second and I'll give you a new crew!" yelled back the *Sagamore's* captain.

But the boat's stroke-oar, his hairy chest still heaving from his exertions, looked up with a dark scowl.

"No, sir; we ain't tired! We're all right—don't want no relief!" he protested mutinously.

"Then shove off in the bow!" ordered the lieutenant delightedly, putting the tiller over.

"—— hard-heads!" growled the *Sagamore's* captain lovingly as he stared after the retreating boat.

Then he turned to a nearby bo'sun's-mate.

"Here, take these men down below and give them some dry clothes and hot coffee. And then have the same things ready when the next load comes in—they'll need 'em, too."

THIS time the boat was not so long in returning, having gained experience on the first trip. Although evidently tired from their long exertions the oarsmen were still pulling sturdily as she swept alongside again. Crew and passengers swarmed quickly aboard, rescued and rescuers grinning happily at the thought of dry clothes and hot coffee.

One of the rescued mariners came quickly up to the *Sagamore's* captain as he stood in the waist giving orders to the bo'sun relative to the boat. The rescued sailor was a big, heavy-jowled, hook-nosed individual, water-soaked and dripping, but there was a cheerful smile on his big red face.

"That's all of us, sir! And we're sure much obliged! Another half-hour or so, and the *Alice* would have broken up completely! You got here in mighty good time."

"Come —— near not being here at all!" grunted the *Sagamore's* captain shortly. "You the skipper? How'd you happen to get on the Shoals?"

"The wind and current set me in before

I knew it. I didn't have any idea we were so close in."

"Why didn't you get in out of the weather, this morning? Why didn't you run into port somewhere?" demanded the *Sagamore's* commanding officer with just a trace of irritation.

"Well, you see I was on my way—owner's orders—from Miami to Fernandina. I thought I could make Fernandina all right. Then I found out I couldn't, so I was hopin' to make Indian River Inlet."

"Humph! Pretty —— foolish," remarked Captain Halloran bluntly. "It's just luck, or we wouldn't have been anywhere around here at all. And now you've lost your ship—there won't be enough left of her tomorrow to build a canary coop out of!"

"That's all right. The owner can afford the loss," replied the other with a reckless laugh. "If she's going to be wrecked I'd ruther she busted up good and plenty. No chance of salvage—get all the insurance, that way!"

"What?"

The *Sagamore's* captain looked up sharply. But just then the radio messenger touched his elbow.

"Here's the Key West message, sir. You said to wait till the boat was all hoisted in again."

"Huh? Oh, yes."

The *Sagamore's* captain accepted the message and began to read. Suddenly his eyes narrowed. His huge hand crumpled the paper into a little wad that dropped into a rope coil just in time to keep from blowing overboard. At the same time the captain's closed fist shot swiftly out and caught the shipwrecked captain squarely between the eyes.

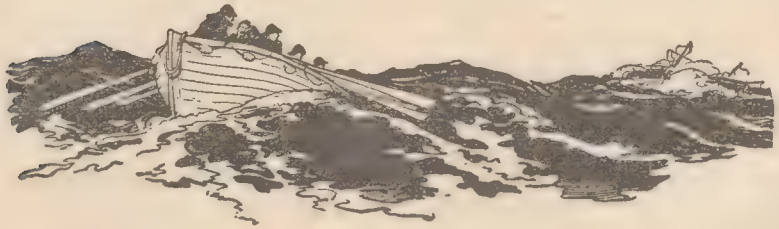
"—— you!" he roared. "I can't heave you overboard again to drown, but I ought to! You low-down son of a pirate! Take that! And that!"

And with each word a straight solid punch crashed into the rescued skipper's face, the last one dropping him in a heap on the *Sagamore's* deck. Then the *Sagamore's* captain turned panting to his amazed lieutenant.

"Now take him down below and clap him in the brig! He can put his dry clothes on down there, if he wants to, —— him!"

The onslaught had occurred so swiftly that none of the dazed onlookers had had time to interfere. But while the sailors continued to stare apprehensively at the furious captain, Lieutenant Bishop suddenly remembered the radiogram that Captain Halloran had wadded up at the beginning of his outburst. He reached swiftly down and picked it up. He read:

(Key West: Nav. Code) Jupiter and Guantanamo working now. Plotted positions of sending ship as follows: three-o-five P.M.— Latitude twenty-six twenty north, longitude eighty-o-five west. Three twenty—latitude twenty-six twenty-four north, longitude eighty-o-five west. At three twenty-five she changed signals to read Triangle instead of Sawtooth Shoals. Last position plotted—immediately off Triangle Shoals.



Lost Diggings

A Five-Part Story
Part IV

By Hugh Pendexter

Author of "A Scout for Virginia," "The Myth Killers," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

WHEN Shoshoni Hale, carrying a rifle and two hand-guns, came into the Boise Basin on the trail of his stolen mare he ran into one thing after another. The first was "Old Idaho," who was reported to have found the famous Lost Diggings, and who met him with no hospitality.

"Don't hanker to have no strange men around my granddarter," said the mountain-man, but Hale stayed long enough at the little cabin to meet Harriet Prescott, who looked like a boy in her buckskin clothes, before he went on down to Boise City.

A gold-mad town was Boise City, Idaho Territory, in this Summer of 'Sixty-five, and a town in which the ordinary processes of justice were reversed, for the power of the law was in the hands of evil men. Shoshoni learned this when he found his horse stalled in a livery stable as the property of Ferd Patterson, gambler, and went to court to try to get the mare back.

After a farcical examination Judge Curks was about to deny all his claims, apparently, when a small, dapper man appeared and said in a shrill voice—

"Just a minute, please."

Judge Curks squirmed and muttered—

"Always glad to hear from Ben Riply."

Ben Riply, of the Payette Committee, symbolized the silent justice that struck without warning, that left its mark—"XXX"—placarded on more than one dangling victim, and that would not hesitate to apply its corrective methods to those in high places. He got Shoshoni his horse and advised him to leave town.

Shoshoni needed no such advice. In the rear of the court-room he had seen a bearded face raised above the crowd and a hand pressed against the right cheek and shoved sharply upward. He broke into a cold sweat of fear.

From the town in which he had made enemies of Ferd Patterson and his gang Shoshoni Hale headed directly for Idaho City, where he had two friends, Jack Gorman and ex-Sheriff Pinkham. As he rode along he heard a hoarse voice—

"Hands up."

It was the Jem Helm gang, looking for Lucky Tom, a miner who had thrown Boise City into great excitement, and had almost got himself lynched, by refusing to tell the location of rich diggings he had discovered. Hale had helped him escape.

After taking his pouch of dust the Helm gang let Shoshoni go, and he rode on, to run into Lucky Tom himself.

"You're welcome as whisky," said the old prospector, and they made camp together.

Next morning two mysterious shots from the bushes killed Lucky Tom. Before he died he signed over his claim to Hale.

"Man! Man!" sobbed Shoshoni. "I brought death to you. They took you for me."

SHOSHONI buried Tom and rode on to Idaho City. He found the town gone crazy over diamonds. Governor Lyon had reported in the East that the Territory was rich with precious stones. No one had found any yet but that made no difference.

In the street Hale met his friend Pinkham.

"Look out for Patterson," warned the ex-sheriff. "What you tell me about Lucky Tom makes me think you better hole up in the hills for a while. Patterson's crowd may even try to use Tom's death against you."

But Hale's departure was delayed. That afternoon the turbulent town became strangely still. Word had gone about—

"Patterson and Shoshoni Hale are meeting up."

Gambler and mountain-man faced each other in the frontier street. But there was no duel. A man shot at Hale from behind. Warned, Shoshoni got him first. Patterson walked away.

That night a mob formed in the streets. Lucky Tom's body had been found. Remembering with a chill Pinkham's words, Hale asked a man whom the lynchers were after.

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"Ferd Patterson for killing Pinkham a few hours ago!"

Hale did not wait to learn the outcome of this. He rode to the mountains with news for Old Idaho.

"Idaho City accuses you of passing counterfeit gold dust." Hale, Old Idaho and his granddaughter thought it best to hide. They went to the Lost Gulch Lucky Tom had given Hale. With them they took an Indian friend of Shoshoni's—Black Cloud, who was very despondent, because he had lost his medicine.

Hale left them and went back to Idaho's cabin. Three men rode past him in the night, and one spoke words that sent a thrill of fear through Shoshoni—

"We'll soon be leading him over the rim of the basin."

He fired three shots at them but missed. He remembered the signal he had seen passed in the court-room. The Danites were after Shoshoni Hale.

Then he went to Idaho's cabin and destroyed evidence of the manufacture of counterfeit dust. The half-demented old man had confessed that he was guilty.

This done, Shoshoni Hale rode on to Placerville, his most important errand still before him.

DISGUISED as a miner, in clothes procured from a Placerville store, Shoshoni took the streets as a mountain man, determined to locate his enemies and meet them face to face. He learned from a bartender that two of them were Mushet and Burnham, friends of Patterson and Sheriff Bowen.

Riding through the night past Centerville to Idaho City, he hobbled his horse in the outskirts and made his way boldly into the main streets. The night life was in full blast. Shoshoni felt secure among the crowds; but his luck sent a drunken acquaintance of his old chum, Jack Gorman, lurching against him.

He was seized by the elbows and a maudlin voice bawled:

"Why, —— it all! You're Shoshoni Hale!"

And there was $1,000 on his head!

Shoshoni tore himself free, and escaped to Gorman's house. Here, though under observation, he told the whole story to his pal. Gorman pointed out that it would be unwise to shoot the three Danites down until a confession had been procured from one of them exonerating Hale from the murder of Lucky Tom.

"But, —— 'em," said Gorman, "I'll back your game!"

Shoshoni reached the hills safely, arriving at Old Idaho's cabin at sunrise a day later. As he thrust aside the grape-vine that concealed the entrance to the hidden gulch he stumbled over the limp form of "Miss Harry" Prescott. In agony he seized her in his arms.

But she had only fallen asleep while keeping watch for him.

As a result of this ceaseless vigil the despondent Black Cloud had not received the new medicine Miss Harry had promised him. It was now presented to him in the form of a bag of pebbles and a small compass. And the old chief's spirit became young again.

Despite her fears for his safety while he was absent, Miss Harry could not conceal her contempt for Shoshoni's cowardice in the face of "imaginary" enemies. He was goaded into telling her of the enmity of the Danites.

"The cowards!" she exclaimed. "They ought to be killed offhand like snakes!"

Nevertheless, her grandfather could not overcome his dislike for the young man. Ever since Hale's return from destroying the spelter-mill in which the counterfeit dust had been made, the old man's bitterness continued to increase. This bitterness now became intensified. Old Idaho had intended madly to blow off the face of a cliff behind which he believed was the "mother lode." In order to save their lives Shoshoni destroyed the powder.

The old man's anger had no chance to grow; for new enemies suddenly appeared. Governor Lyons and his partner, Fogus, passed slowly along the trail as if prospecting.

"Derned if the fools ain't hunting for diamonds!" cried Old Idaho.

This inflamed his imagination. The gold fever became a diamond craze. One morning Hale was awakened by an outcry—

"Granddaddy's gone!"

No trace of him could be found by Shoshoni or the Indian. Black Cloud rode to Idaho City. He returned with the news that Old Idaho was in jail and the mob feeling was running high against him because of the counterfeit gold-dust. He also carried a letter from Gorman. This letter contained the name of the third and last of Shoshoni's Danite enemies.

It was Weber Joe.

Shoshoni destroyed the evidence against Old Idaho, substituting genuine gold-dust for the counterfeit.

Then he mounted his horse and rode grimly toward Placerville.

CHAPTER X

THE PLOTTERS

PATTERSON stood at the window in the sheriff's best room and stared down sullenly into the dark street. He had been drinking heavily, although there was no token of it in his pale face. But Bowen knew his man and understood that the cold veneer of his deportment might crack open any moment and permit the devil in the stormy soul to show.

The gambler wheeled about from the window and demanded.

"But why not tonight? I can't stay cooped up in this —— hole."

"You was down there last night, most every night, Ferd. I tell you too much talk's being made.

"Bah! Give me the real reason. Why shouldn't I go there as much as I like? Ain't you the boss here? Going to let a lot

of old women storekeepers tell you what to do? Ain't I going to win clear on the charge?"

"I'm boss as long as another Payette Committee don't get busy and rear up on its hind-legs. Then —— will be to pay for all of us. You'll win out on the murder charge if you don't kick over the traces before we come to trial. Don't you have my best room to loaf in? Ain't you well supplied with all you can ask for in drinks and smokes and grub?"

"I want the real reason why I shouldn't go to the Gold Dust Saloon tonight," repeated Patterson.

Bowen was not deceived by the polite timbre of his voice. His hand wandered to his hip as he replied.

"You shall have it. You've been drinking too much. Hold on! I don't say you're drunk. Wish you were. But you're in such a state of mind that while appearing to be sober it wouldn't take more'n a word to set you going. If you kill any one while waiting for trial they'll swing you offhand."

Patterson walked to the easy chair by the table and seated himself and with elaborate care lighted a cigar.

"Liquor does take me bad sometimes," he quietly agreed. "But ever since that —— Hale was in town, sneaking right under your eyes, there's nothing but whisky that helps me keep my nerve. If he can come once like that, he'll come again."

"I'm not even admitting he was here," sourly replied the sheriff. "If he was he took mighty good care to keep out of sight. A drunken fool says he saw him. No one else saw him. We picketed every road out of town. We kept tabs on Gorman. Hale never came near Gorman. Hale isn't a fool. Why should he come here and run the risk of being caught?"

"I'm thinking he was keen to find somebody," muttered Patterson; and for once he eyed the iron bars across the window with approval. "All right, Bowen. I'll be a good boy and stay at home tonight. But tomorrow night I must see Curks at the Gold Dust."

"You bet you'll see him. Just have a sleep and get out of that wolf spell and we'll have a high old time in the back room tomorrow. Curks can be a pretty lively feller with a bottle when he takes the notion."

"But he never gets drunk. He never loses control of that tongue of his," growled Patterson. "I wonder just what his game is, anyway."

"Same's ours. He's playing on our side. Get something certain about these diamond diggings and make a clean-up. Take Mushet, Burnham and Weber Joe, and we couldn't ask for a stouter crowd."

"They're stout," muttered Patterson, starting to pour out a drink and changing his mind. "Sometimes I'm wondering if they ain't too stout. They're Mormons. They'll favor Mormons before favoring us."

"Down in Utah, yes. But up here in Idaho they don't want to try any of that Church business."

Patterson fell to chuckling softly and Bowen's hand went back to the gun.

"Tell me the joke, Ferd," he begged.

"Oh, I was only thinking what a —— of a stir it would make if the town knew the truth about the death of Lucky Tom. A judge of one of our courts——"

"Ferd! Ferd! Are you plumb mad?" gasped the sheriff. "Good heavens, man if one of my deputies should happen to hear you say them words and should git drunk and repeat 'em so's Curks, or his friends, heard about it— Well, I don't know how much small change your life would be worth."

"Meaning they'd walk right into this jail and cut my throat, eh?" snarled Patterson.

"Not that," mumbled the sheriff. "But they'd do a mighty slick job in proving how *you* killed Lucky Tom."

"What!" cried the gambler, springing to his feet and resting his hands on the table. "You stand there and calmly tell me that they can work a dirty job like that on me and make it stick?"

"You sit down, Ferd. If you make a move toward me I'll blow a hole through you bigger'n a pack-saddle. I didn't say they'd do you dirt unless you made that kind of talk and it got to them. They ain't the kind to keep their arms folded if a man goes to get 'em."

Patterson bowed his head and remained silent for a minute, thinking. His voice was perfectly calm, almost nonchalant, as he said:

"All right. I missed a bet. It's better I'm here than at the saloon. No; there'd be no sense in their playing a game on me unless they had cause. I'll never give them cause. But, Bowen, even when I haven't

had a drink for days I sometimes wonder just how far they're to be trusted."

He said this very earnestly, and Bowen as sincerely answered:

"We can trust 'em to the limit in anything limited to Idaho. They're after diamonds and agree to work with us. Also, they're after Shoshoni Hale. You'n me are perfectly willing they should get him, ain't we?"

Patterson clicked his white teeth and nodded his head. Bowen resumed:

"And maybe they didn't cuss in a soft, quiet way when they got back and heard that Hale had been here! Such language. I really believe they'd rather get Hale than to bag the diamonds."

"I reckon it's safe to play that with a copper," agreed Patterson, his face lighting. "The old man refuses to talk?"

"Been at him twice today. I reckoned he'd be scared blue when he was brought in. He was nervous, but all he seems to think about is diamonds. He's hiding something that makes him feel tickled and at the same time worries him."

"He showed that when he was up here. No new signs of worrying about his girl?"

Bowen shook his head; then added:

"I may be mistaken, but I've got the idea he ain't overfond of Shoshoni Hale. Yet if he knows where Hale's hiding he won't make a peep."

"Have him up and we'll talk to him," said Patterson.

"But no rough work," warned Bowen, eyeing his prisoner dubiously.

"I won't move out of this chair. Fetch him along."

Bowen went to the door and gave an order to a deputy who was lounging in the corridor. In a short time Old Idaho was led in. Bowen motioned him to be seated. Idaho glared defiantly at Patterson and slumped down in an easy chair. Twice before this the gambler had endeavored to wear down the old man's will power and force a confession as to where he had been hiding, and on each essay he had signally failed.

Patterson stared at the ceiling and carelessly asked—

"Where had you come from when Fogus picked you up, Idaho?"

"Just been wandering round a trifle," promptly replied Idaho.

"Your girl is well, I hope?"

"My granddaughter is enjoying good health."

Bowen spoke up earnestly, saying:

"Old Idaho, I'm your friend. I wasn't the cause of your being brought here. I've tried to do well by you. As your friend I tell you it's for your own good and for the girl's good that you tell us where she is."

Old Idaho's bushy brows went up and his gaze was very innocent as he answered:

"But I don't know, I tell you. I ain't seen her for some time. Think she must 'a' rode to Lewiston or Umatilla."

"Where's Shoshoni Hale?" shot in Patterson.

"Lawd! I ain't no more idee then nothing at all. He's probably back in the hills, jumping from place to place like a jackrabbit."

"Hale's no friend of yours, Idaho," solemnly informed Patterson.

The aged face grew angry and his voice was harsh as Idaho retorted:

"I reckon I know that. He ain't no friend of yours, either."

"Then why don't you tell where he is? Why try to defend a man who's your enemy?"

Old Idaho held his tongue. The gambler displayed more venom when he warned:

"You're in jail. You're going to stay in jail till you answer my questions or till you're hung."

Bowen noted the grim set of Idaho's jaw and signaled for Patterson to subside. Then he asked—

"Where did Fogus pick you up?"

"Near the river. From what I heard I reckon he and Lyon was out hunting for di'mon's and found some." Now the old man's eyes sparkled brightly.

"Hunting for diamonds?" scoffed the sheriff. "A likely yarn. Where'd they be doing such a fool thing as that?"

The old man started to make a hot reply, then grinned cunningly and said:

"Can't say. Never can tell where a fool errand will take a man. Mebbe they'd tell you. I'm too much worried about my granddaughter."

Patterson and the sheriff exchanged looks. With an effort the gambler controlled his devil's temper and said:

"It'll be better for your girl if you tell us where Fogus was hunting."

"If we ever find any diamonds we'll give you a share," added Bowen.

Old Idaho smiled in his beard. He had not been greatly upset when made a prisoner. Now he was almost enjoying himself. Patterson was a prisoner on a murder charge, and yet he was most comfortably housed and had cigars and liquors on his table, quite like the gentleman. The two men had started with a desire to locate the girl but were now—and this pleased Old Idaho much—anxious to learn where Governor Lyon and Fogus had prospected for diamonds.

"We're waiting," ominously reminded the gambler.

"Oh, that's all right," snickered the old man. "Take your time. Nothing to hinder."

"You'll do mighty little waiting before swinging if we once give the word," grated Patterson, thrusting his white face toward Idaho.

"Swing for passing crooked dust," added the sheriff.

"You say your granddaughter is enjoying good health, and in the same breath you say you're worried about her and don't know where she is."

Old Idaho grinned tantalizingly, and the gambler cried—

"You'll swing for the old counterfeiter that you are!"

"I'll prob'ly swing for that the same time you swing for killing Sumner Pinkham," the old man replied.

Leaping to his feet, Patterson seized a bottle of whisky by the neck and swung it above his head. The sheriff grabbed his arm from behind and hoarsely begged:

"My ——, Ferd! Don't! Even I couldn't save you. Stop it and sit down! There's a better way, I tell you. We'll prove he passed the dust and then the mob will overpower the guards and hang him."

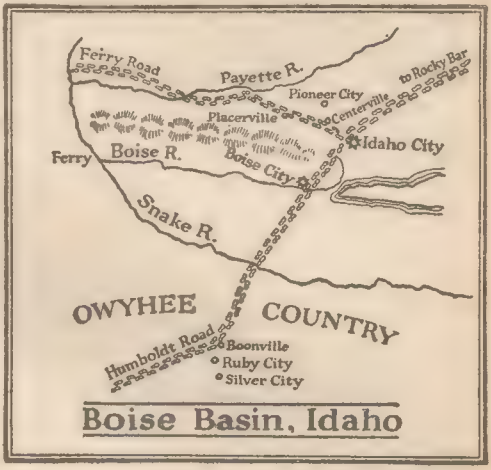
Patterson surrendered the bottle, dropped into his chair, and mumbled:

"Take him away before I kill him. Come back and we'll talk."

Old Idaho was glad to be returned to his cell and placed under guard so no one might talk with him. On his former visits to the gambler's comfortable quarters he had shrewdly guessed the two men were trying to frighten him, but this last experience taught him that Patterson was not one to be annoyed beyond a certain degree.

Bowen hurried back to his friend and found him pacing the floor and chewing an unlighted cigar. The gambler was deep in thought and gave no heed to the sheriff until the latter pulled his chair to the table, helped himself to a drink, and said:

"This is my idea how it should be worked. Take some citizens, search his cabin and find the bogus dust. That'll clinch the case



Boise Basin, Idaho

against him absolutely and give us a hold on him. The dust he passed on you won't cut much of a figure so long as you're under arrest for murder."

"Don't be so cursedly unpleasant. That's an ugly word," growled Patterson.

"It don't make much difference what you call it so long as you get clear. If the dust is found in his cabin his dinner is cooked to a crisp. Then we'll be in position to put the fear of death into him. I'll pass word to the boys to come in a mob and hoot under his window. Then we'll tell him to talk, or go to the mob."

"And if he is stubborn as ——? What then?"

"Then his girl will hear about it and come flying. Don't forget for a second that she's near here. Once she comes into the game she can disappear; and if the old man refuses to be bluffed by our mob he'll tell all he knows about the diamonds mighty quick when he learns we have the girl."

"That sounds right," mused the gambler. "The girl is the ace, all right. It gives us two ways to get him. Plant the cabin, eh? Got some fake dust ready?"

The sheriff laughed heartily and explained:

"It's funny how things work out. One of the boys, under my orders, went through

the place last week and found where he'd hidden six bags of the stuff. I had told him not to disturb anything he found and he didn't except to take a pinch from each bag and fetch it to me. It was all counterfeit. Of course it would never do for us to fetch it away, or let on that we knew anything about it. It must be found by some men like Riply or Gorman. With them as witnesses there can't be any loose talk about any one salting the cabin. Why, I've been scared lest the old fool would confess about the dust when we had him up here alone. I want him to deny it up hill and down, and deny it before some of the business men. Then we'll take him down there with some men like Ben Riply, have him deny it on the spot, then uncover the stuff."

"——! That's clever. You've got some brains all right!" softly approved the gambler. "If your man had brought it away some of these pious folks would be howling as how you'd cooked the evidence."

"That isn't all," proudly continued the sheriff. "I knew he had to have a place for making it. I sent the boys out to comb the country around the cabin and they found what must have been the old man's mill. Some one had made a fire and burned it. But once the dust is found under his cabin floor the mill will be swallowed as a fact."

Patterson nodded and pondered over the matter carefully. Finally he said:

"Get Riply, Gorman and others of their caliber together and in their presence ask the old man if he has any counterfeit dust hidden away. If he confesses it'll be before impartial witnesses. If he lies, take him down there and prove him a liar and it's twenty to one that he breaks down and tells the truth—always before witnesses. It's absolutely necessary that some of those pure-hearted fellows go along."

"They can't refuse after making their bleat about 'law and order,' " chuckled the sheriff. "I'll have some of them, Riply for choice, select an assayer to go with us. The stuff will be found in their presence and tested by the assayer in their presence. Then there can't be any flare-back."

"But don't be too quick to find it," warned Patterson. "Just happen upon it. Then rush the old man back here. Tell him the mob's coming to hang him, but that you'll sneak him away to Pioneer City and keep him under cover till the excitement is over if he'll tell where the girl's hiding, or where Lyon went hunting for diamonds. If he tells anything it'll be about the diamonds. Word will reach the girl somehow, and if I know that young wildcat she'll come a flying."

"Wonder if she's hiding with Shoshoni Hale," mused the sheriff. "If Muggsy was right in saying he saw him in town the other night then it proves he's hiding within easy striking-distance. I'll gamble that he and the girl and the old man have been together."

Patterson became a cursing madman. For five minutes he paced the floor, pouring forth terrible maledictions as he pictured the road-builder successful where he had failed.

"Curse him!" he hoarsely shouted in concluding his tirade. "I ought to have cut his heart out! I'd rather he was dead than a dozen Pinkhams!"

"Ferd! Ferd! They'll hear you in the street. Simmer down, or our goose is in the fire. Curks was saying yesterday how folks are talking about your going to the Gold Dust so often."

"—— Curks!"

"But he's cunning. He's shrewd. He's got the mind of a weasel. He's got lots of brains. And he's with us. He's Updyke's right-hand man. He's a Mormon and is close to Mushet and Burnham. He's our best bet that Mushet and Burnham will never play crooked with us. When he says we're overplaying our hand it's high time we pricked up our ears and harked."

EXHAUSTED by his passion, Patterson dropped into his chair, poured himself some whisky and faintly promised:

"I won't break loose like that again. But the minute you said it I knew it must be true. Hale disappears. He bobs up—for I believe he was in town that night—and vanishes again. There's no question about his hiding near here. All the better! It'll make Curks and his friends all the keener to play with us. We'll get Hale when we get the girl, for if she rides in he'll be sure to follow. I want Shoshoni Hale's game closed! I want it bad. We'll cut down our visits to the Gold Dust, but I must go there tomorrow night. It won't look so queer as to have the gang trooping up here. At the worst the town will think I'm there to play

a card and find company. Tomorrow you can pass the word to Riply and Gorman and have them arrange a committee to meet here the next day. Insist on those two going."

"They'll go," assured the sheriff. "They can't back water after making so much loose talk about the way I run my office and after sneaking down to Vantine's store to hold secret meetings with business men when they think I ain't noticing."

Patterson's pale face lengthened.

"Do you know they've been holding secret meetings?" he demanded.

"Course I know it. The porter at the store gits drunk after hours in the Quartz Saloon. He told little Elsie how his boss took men down-stairs into the underground storeroom. There's only one thing that would pack fifty men together down in that hole; and Ben Riply's sticking round here till they get their committee organized. He's showing them the Payette way. And I'd feel lots happier if I could stumble onto a pint of diamonds and quit the Territory. Curks and his friends feel much the same way."

"They'll never have much heart for diamonds until they've put Hale out of the way. Bagging him will be their first job. If he was here as Muggsy says, it looks bad for them unless they get him quick."

"They're thinking about him every day," said the sheriff with a grin.

Patterson's face was impassive, but in his heart he was worried. He had seen the suppression of the lawless element in various mining-camps. His education permitted him to look beyond the morrow and to understand that crime could hold sway only for a limited time. He had believed that it would require at least another year for the honest men and women of Idaho to secure control of the Territory's affairs. Now he was fearing the transfer of power would be made much sooner. He was careful to mention nothing of this sort to the sheriff, however. Should Bowen perceive the change coming he would fear for himself and endeavor to safeguard number one at the expense of all his old cronies.

The gambler filled two glasses, pushed one toward the sheriff and bruskly announced:

"Open the game tomorrow. Fix it to start for the cabin the day after if possible. Tell Mushet there's no doubt about Hale being in town while they were away."

"You're a shrewd one, Ferd," exclaimed the sheriff admiringly. "You look around and beyond a case the best of any man I ever saw."

After Bowen had gone about his duties Patterson abandoned his impassivity and smoked cigar after cigar without losing the worried expression from his face. In San Francisco it had seemed the easiest and most desirable of lives. Soft living and money for the taking while fools roughed it and lived hard. After he was compelled to flee from California he continued satisfied with his mode of life.

In Oregon all had gone well until he killed Staples. He could now see that Staples' death had been a bad play, yet he did not regret it. Pinkham's death had been deliberately planned from the time of the adventurer's arrival in Idaho. But tonight, with tobacco witholding its solace, he was questioning the wisdom of this last crime. He suspected that he had worked more for Bowen and his little ring than he had for Ferd Patterson. He would be cleared; the sheriff and his friends would see to that. The jury to hear the evidence would contain men for acquittal even if they had witnessed the crime.

But Patterson was wondering where he would go next. With Riply inculcating the Payette Committee's ideas of speedy justice, the Snake River basin would soon be too small to hold a marked man. When he left Texas to enter upon a career of gambling and ruthless slaying the geographical scope for his talents seemed to be illimitable. But Staples' death and other affairs now barred the Coast to him except as he might sneak through as a wary transient.

Montana would have been his choice had not the hanging of Henry Plummer and his henchmen the year before spoiled that climate for the lawless.

"Texas and Mexico left!" he concluded in disgust. "To wind up about where I started. And I never could stand greasers with their knives ready for your back. It would have been better if I hadn't turned Pinkham off. Yet I'm glad he's dead. If I could get hold of that girl I'd break to Utah with her. Probably a fool to make a play for her. But somehow— Well, she's the only thing that ever suited me completely."

CHAPTER X

VINDICATION

OLD IDAHO faced the morning's menace with a courage built up overnight. His defiance of Patterson both elated and amazed him. He had dared to speak derisively to one who was in high favor with the sheriff. And nothing had happened to him. True, the gambler had attempted to brain him with a bottle but the very fact the attack was blocked by Bowen proved to the old man that he was a figure of much consequence.

Idaho realized he had a double secret to guard; the town's citizens must not learn the location of Lucky Gulch, nor the fact that Lyon and Fogus had hunted diamonds at its mouth. From the last two men he must keep the secret of the gulch. This high resolve never to betray the Lost Diggings left him less concerned about the charges of counterfeiting.

Diamonds, rather than gold, were filling his thoughts as he ate his breakfast in the narrow cell and waited for his captors to make the next move. His avid greed for precious stones convinced him that Patterson and all the others were similarly obsessed.

This belief forced his granddaughter deeper into the background and permitted him to minimize his former fears for her safety. For who would have a thought for a chit of a girl when diamonds were the stake? Diamonds! Why, even the "teeny" ones were worth a thousand dollars apiece. By mental calculation he decided he could carry half a million dollars' worth in one capacious pocket. The thought made his heart throb painfully. It followed that he was in a defiant, an almost disdainful mood, when he was conducted to the sheriff's office for further questioning.

But when he passed through the doorway and beheld the audience awaiting his coming vague fears began disturbing his complacency. The presence of Ben Riply, slight and dapper and the mouthpiece for the famous Payette Committee, warned him his affairs might be taking a grim turn. Beside Riply was seated Jack Gorman, who barely nodded to the prisoner and who looked very sober. Along the wall were seated several merchants and professional men, and their abstraction was ominous. Hoskam, an assayer, reputable and well-liked, was seated beside the sheriff.

Patterson had been astute enough to plan a gathering of the town's best element so that no question would be raised as to the genuineness of any evidence discovered. Aside from the sheriff and one deputy there was none of the criminal class present.

After Old Idaho had seated himself the sheriff announced:

"Gentlemen, we have a stubborn case here. This man is accused of making and passing counterfeit gold dust. I've asked you here to listen to anything he might have to say before we search his cabin down on the Payette. I am hoping he will confess and save the county expense. It will count in his favor later on. I hope he will tell us where he keeps his stock of spelter, providing he has not got rid of it all."

He paused and waited for Judge Curks to sidle through the door and to a chair. Then he continued, addressing the prisoner—

"What have you to say?"

The old man stared at the ceiling. He was not so well satisfied with his position as he had been while confronting Patterson and the sheriff alone. Ben Riply leaned forward and in his shrill, incisive voice commanded:

"Your attention, prisoner. Answer the sheriff."

Old Idaho shifted his position. The little man disturbed him. He could ignore the bluster of the sheriff, but there was much talk about the silent power represented by Riply.

"I ain't got any make-believe dust," he said slowly.

"That seems to settle this part of it, Sheriff," Riply briskly said. "He has had his chance. He denies. Now follows the search to substantiate the charge, I suppose."

"That's what we're reckoning on, Mr. Riply. Of course there's a chance he's telling the truth after getting rid of all of it. He got rid of twenty ounces at Patterson's table alone."

"Patterson is up for murder. I'm afraid a jury wouldn't take much stock in his evidence. If we must go down to the cabin let's be about it."

But the merchants and professional men at once developed uneasiness. The trip was tedious and would take them away from

their affairs. One spoke for all when he suggested:

"We understand this is merely a move to secure possible evidence. We men here are tied down to business matters and can't afford the time necessary for such an investigation unless our presence is absolutely necessary. I have two wagon-trains due any hour and I know the others are as pressingly engaged. I would urge that Ben Riply go as our representative. Mr. Riply knows we will not allow him to make any financial sacrifice, but just now he's foot-free and we're hitched up."

Riply prompty replied:

"I was asked to come to Idaho City by certain gentlemen to give advice on certain matters. This case seems to fit into our business. I'll be pleased to act for the citizens in general."

Old Idaho squirmed under the speaker's cold gaze.

"I'd like to go along if no one objects," spoke up Gorman.

"No one would suit me better," said Riply.

Judge Curks rose and, folding his bony hands, announced:

"It is my desire, as judge of the Boise City court, to make this trip. Boise City believes it can learn much from its sister town. And we folks down in Boise hope to work hand and glove with you people in elevating the cause of law and order."

Riply gazed at him stonily. The sheriff expressed his pleasure in having the representative of Boise City justice in the party. He proceeded to explain the presence of the assayer. The assemblage expressed its approval of Hoskam's part in the investigation and then broke up. The sheriff directed the deputy to bring horses, and Gorman and Riply departed to procure their mounts. Old Idaho, now nervous and apprehensive, tried to stifle his fears by remembering that Governor Lyon and D. H. Fogus also had a secret to guard. What could Idaho City do to an old man if the governor of the Territory was on his side?

"And by Judas! He'll be on my side when he learns what I've got to trade," muttered Idaho. "I can throw it either way. If they find the stuff I can buy myself off by telling Lyon I'll give him away if I ain't turned loose and given a share in the diggings. My diggings, if I could have my rights. And I can always trade with the sheriff—me to go loose and him to have a chance at the sparklers. I'm all right no matter how the cat jumps."

Yet the sharp, cold face of Riply worried him; but what was one man against the influence of the law as represented by the governor and the sheriff? He would have felt more at ease, however, had he not been cross-examined by Patterson and the sheriff, concerning the girl and his own knowledge of the diamond diggings. The concentration of all efforts to prove him to be a counterfeiter was disquieting.

When the cavalcade finally formed it contained nearly a dozen men, the solid element of the town being represented by Riply, Gorman and Hoskam. Judge Curks rode up on his spotted pony. For the benefit of the spectators he informed the sheriff:

"Boise City, sir, is not above learning how to enforce the law by studying the efforts of this beautiful town. Where Idaho City makes improvements Boise City is proud to imitate."

This sentiment was greeted with a faint cheer from a group of ne'er-do-wells, and a sardonic grin from Gorman. Riply frowned and whispered:

"That's one of the worst ones in the whole lot. He's so cunning it's almost impossible to catch him. He's one of Patterson's friends. Shoshoni Hale will swear to that."

"Shoshoni Hale," sighed Gorman. "Wish everything was all right for him. He's a mighty fine man."

"I admire your loyalty, but your friend has much to explain before I can accept him as being all right," curtly returned Riply. "If he didn't kill the miner why does he hide? They'll get him some time."

"He's hiding from Mushet, Burnham and Weber Joe. They killed his father. They've been after him by spells for the last six years."

"And it's said his real name is Harris. Why be ashamed of his name? The three are in town now. Why doesn't he have a reckoning if they killed his father? Sounds fishy. He doesn't look like a man who'd dodge a fight."

"Hale or Harris, he's all right," stubbornly insisted Gorman. "As for the Danites he's just learned who they are. We'll hear from him some day."

The sheriff now gave the word and the investigators trotted from town, riding in double column. The pace was easy with

no attempt made to make time and the night was spent in the open some ten miles below Placerville. The journey was resumed at sunrise.

At the very start Old Idaho had vowed to himself that he would hold his tongue and answer no questions. When they induced him to talk they would catch a weasel asleep. He knew the traps they'd try to lay for him even before they spoke a word. This and much more he kept telling himself. But no one endeavored to make him talk on the first day, nor on the second, while they were fleeing from the sundown the western road.

This indifference began to worry him. Of course they had some game, and of course they would try it before reaching his cabin; and yet Riply and Gorman, riding side by side, had nothing to say to him. The sheriff, riding companion of Judge Curks, heretofore so persistent in questioning him, now gave him no heed. Even the deputy who rode at his stirrup, ordinarily a garrulous fellow, had no interest in him.

Of the others there was none to give him more than a passing glance of curiosity. Among themselves they talked and laughed, but the prisoner was left entirely to his own reflections.

Intense contemplation of possible diamond mines could not compensate for this sort of treatment. Each mile of the journey found it more difficult for him to concentrate his thoughts on the chimerical riches. Various causes for worry demanded his attention. There were the girl's fears over his disappearance. Heretofore his viewpoint had been too narrow and selfish for him to reflect on Harriet's alarm on discovering he had left the gulch.

He had stolen out in the night, believing with childish credulity that he might find a diamond on the surface of the broken rock; and he had taken it for granted that diamonds glittered and shone in the dark. When morning came he was amazed to observe how far he had wandered from the fan-shaped talus. Doggedly insistent on making his imprudence count for something he had pressed on to other rocky areas, and blinded by his great passion he had lost track of time and had neglected to take note of the various landmarks. Doubtless his hopes and anxieties had obscured his natural shrewdness.

Ever since his capture he had endeavored to recall his movements in the early morning, but there were bits he could not remember. It was much like having his physical vision baffled by a black patch pasted over every object he would observe. He did recall planning to get a keg of powder from his cabin. His granddaughter even now might be in danger from searching for him. When belabored with questions the instinct to defend himself left no room for these worries. If the men refused to talk to him he was resolved to bait them a bit.

"I ain't got any make-believe dust hid anywhere," he told the deputy at his side, but speaking loudly for the benefit of the sheriff and Curks who rode just in front.

The deputy grinned vacuously and took a fresh chew of tobacco. Old Idaho waited for some one to speak. Disappointed, he leered cunningly at the deputy and confided:

"But I got some things in my old head that's worth knowing. Worth millions."

Curks pressed against the sheriff's knee.

"You probably got a real gold-mine hid away somewhere," jested the deputy.

"You've hit nearer the mark than your fool brains ever reckoned on doing, young man. I don't have to peddle spelter when I've got a real mine."

"Like —— you've got a mine!" And the deputy guffawed loudly.

"Well, Lucky Tom had one, they say," Idaho quietly reminded.

Curks stiffened and twisted his bony jaw toward the sheriff. The sheriff's hand, resting on the pommel of the saddle, trembled slightly. The deputy's jaws became stationary and he stared owlishly at the prisoner. All he could think to reply was—

"You reckon you're a smart old hellion."

"You'd eat out of my hand for just what I can pan out in one hour, you fool!"

From the corner of his mouth Curks warned the sheriff—

"Shut him up!"

The sheriff turned and delivered a malignant glance at the grinning deputy, sobering him at once. In doing this he noticed that greedy ears had overheard the old man's boasts, and that more than one pair of eyes were glaring wolfishly at the prisoner.

"Idaho, you talk too much for your own good. Best keep shut," he growled.

The old man was elated. He had drawn their fire. He had proved he was not to be ignored. The lively curiosity in the deputy's

face and the ferocious interest revealed by several of the others convinced him he had started a train of thought which was leading at right angles from the matter under investigation. He felt that he was master of the situation; and his head went up. With the possible exception of Riply and Gorman at the head of the column, and Hoskam, the assayer, just behind them, there was none in the procession who was not wishing the business was over and the more momentous task of pumping the prisoner was under way.

Lucky Tom had baffled all endeavors to find his diggings. Just how the "vegetable man" could have stumbled onto the great secret was a tremendous problem. But if the "how of it" were erased, and if it were assumed that his alleged knowledge of the placer was fact, then there was furnished enough thought for wild speculations to keep the whole basin on tip-toe for the rest of the season.

There were some who scoffed at the diamond craze: there was none who made light of the lost diggings. It was fantastic to imagine the old man in possession of the great secret, and yet fortune played queer pranks in El Dorado; and there were historical instances of lucky discoveries which must have made the mountain gods laugh ironically.

And yet the old man's veiled boast was not so grotesque when one recalled the stories about his first coming to the basin of the Snake. Beginning with the first rush to the Clearwater region in 1860 there had been the stories of how Old Idaho had stumbled upon enormously rich diggings while passing through the country in 'Forty-five.

These stories had passed beyond the legend stage and were accepted as being more substantial than the ordinary tradition. If he could have made the original discovery by accident, why could he not relocate the placer after several years' residence in the country?

"He's got it!" whispered Curks under his breath, and the deep-set eyes glowed like coals. "Almost wish Mushet and Burnham were here."

"And he's blabbed it to all this crowd. This trip's a bad move. You ought to have kept him a close prisoner. Now he's talked it'll be a bad move to take him back to town. Some one will get the truth out of him."

"Finding the spelter will send him back to jail; no way out of that. But I'll keep him close. Patterson is keenest over the girl."

"He's a fool! If he'd gone about it right he could buy a thousand women. He bungled it. Even if he knew where the diggings are he couldn't stay here to work them after he's acquitted. Pinkham's friends will get him yet."

"Hard work to believe the old cuss really knows."

"I tell you he's struck it rich."

"Then it's mighty queer he should be putting out spelter dust."

"He struck it since the miner was killed. No one ever believed he was the miner's partner."

They dared whisper no more, for the men behind were crowding forward and those ahead were holding back, each eager to catch a pivotal word. The deputy worked his jaws rapidly, his stupid brain reeling under the immensity of new thoughts. He had been a contented hanger-on of the Bowen-Patterson gang; now brain cells were opening to allow a strange company to troop forth. He saw himself a man of unlimited wealth, of holding the purchase price of inexhaustible comforts—whisky, tobacco and animalism.

The sheriff dropped back and said to the deputy—

"Judge Curks wants to talk to you."

The old lethargy returned. The dream of independence was but a flash high above the inaccessible heights. From the dizzy potentials of millions he slipped back into the comfortable groove of being a "kept man." If the gang struck it rich he would receive something, maybe a thousand dollars. He shivered with delight in visualizing what that would buy. Millions tore at his mind and left it raw and lacerated. But a thousand dollars was a soft and genial friend. He took the sheriff's place beside Curks, and by the time they reached the cabin his mind was asleep, his equanimity was restored. The hazy notion of kidnaping the old man and forcing him to reveal his secret was forgotten.

Riply and Gorman were the first to reach and enter the cabin. They had satisfied themselves there were no signs of recent occupancy by the time the sheriff jogged up with the prisoner. Judge Curks suggested:

"It won't be convenient to have us all inside while the search is being made. We can all stay out here by the open door and windows except the sheriff, the deputy, Gorman, Riply and Hoskam."

He sat on the threshold of the door, his sunken eyes taking in every detail of the room. Old Idaho was deeply affected to be back in the familiar place and at once went to the adjoining room and stroked the simple gowns. For the moment he thought neither of gold nor diamonds and was only an old man sorrowing for the company of the girl he had so eccentrically deserted.

"But I didn't go for to do it, Harry," he whispered to a white gown. "Good Heavens! You'd never think that of your old granddaddy, Harry! What's done was done to leave you a rich lady."

"We want you, Idaho," Ben Riply crisply commanded. "We have no time to lose. Have you any counterfeit dust hidden in or about this cabin?"

Old Idaho attempted to gain time by complaining—

"That's for the sheriff to ask, not you."

"I speak for Idaho City. I speak for the county," snapped Riply.

"I advise you to answer any question Riply puts," said Gorman. "I speak as your friend."

"It's my place to put the questions," interrupted the sheriff. "But being an honest man, and as all here, so far as I know, are honest men, it don't matter who asks the questions. Idaho, save time by telling us about your spelter dust."

Old Idaho wet his lips. He was cornered, but he believed his hiding-place was very secure. He was cornered, and the instinct to fight to the last inch swelled up within him. "I ain't got nary a bit of make-believe dust, and never had," he cried.

"We'll begin the search without wasting more words," said the sheriff and motioning for the deputy to proceed.

"I'll take the other room," said Gorman, making for the door and forestalling the deputy.

Old Idaho found his gaze was continually switching back to the floor at the right of the fireplace. He feared he would betray himself, and to prevent such catastrophe he turned his chair and forced himself to keep his eyes focused on the doorway of his granddaughter's room. The sheriff was busy searching the cupboards. When he would have forced open a chest Riply said:

"Why waste more time? If there's anything hidden it's under the floor."

As he spoke he fastened his gaze on the old man, and Idaho involuntarily twisted his head and for a second stared to the right of the fireplace. He then remembered what he must guard against and quickly turned away. Riply smiled and walked to the fireplace and tapped the floor with his foot. Once more Old Idaho was compelled to switch his gaze about, and his aged eyes shone with fear.

"I thought so," said Riply. "He was looking at this spot when he came in. That's one reason why I wanted to get inside ahead of him. Look under there."

Gorman ran from the girl's room. Men crowded close around Curks at the open door. Word was passed that the search was all but ended. Curks furtively watched Riply and felt a new respect for the little man's astuteness.

"A dangerous man," he told himself.

Some one produced a Bowie-knife and handed it to the kneeling sheriff.

"Stop! Stop!" shrieked Old Idaho. "It ain't there! Nothing ain't there! You fellers quit prodding round my property! You quit, or you'll never know about the diamonds, or Lucky Gulch!"

Curks groaned. If only he and his kind could have handled the affair! What would they not learn from the old man! Idaho's hysterical voice dwindled down to a faint squeal as the knife slipped under the short length of board. Then came a crescendo of vituperation, directed largely at Riply and mixed with incoherent references to Governor Lyon and Fogus.

"Idaho, you keep still," commanded Gorman, placing a hand on his shoulder. "All this makes it bad for you."

The old man became silent, not because of the warning, but at sight of the board being removed. Hoskam rose from his seat in the corner and advanced to the table, ready to perform his part in the investigation. The sheriff thrust his hand through the opening and the prisoner moaned in despair.

"Pass up the evidence," said Riply, smiling coldly at the old man.

The sheriff began pulling forth the plump bags. Riply took them and arranged them on the table until there were six in line. The sheriff rose, brushed his knees and announced—

"That's all. There's a tin box down there, too big to be taken out without removing the floor. It's empty now."

"The gist of the matter is what the bags contain and not the container," croaked Curks.

Hoskam advanced to the table and looked at the sheriff. The latter nodded for him to proceed. The assayer opened a bag and spilled some of the dust into his hand. He glanced at it, then frowned and poured the entire contents out on the table. His examination was very brief. Turning to the deeply interested group, he said:

"I won't bother to make any tests. They're not necessary."

"As bad as that!" exclaimed the sheriff.

"No. It's good as that. I'll stake my reputation that this is genuine gold dust. There are quite a few small nuggets scattered through it. I'll be glad to give sixteen dollars an ounce for it just as it is."

Old Idaho made a faint choking sound and slipped lower into his chair, his mouth agape and showing a black hole through the white beard. Only Riply had eyes for him. The others stared stupidly at the assayer. The sheriff leaned against the wall as one stunned by a heavy blow. Hoskam carefully swept the dust back into the bag and tied it securely. He opened another and poured the gold out on the table.

"The pure quill, gentlemen. Not cleaned as carefully as it might be, but I'll give sixteen an ounce for it just as it is."

"I don't understand! I thought—" began the sheriff in a dazed voice.

Curks quickly cut in:

"Nor can any one understand. Why didn't he tell about it? A man could have been sent and saved all this trouble."

"We're not through yet," said Riply. "There are four more bags to be examined."

He was much puzzled. He went to the table and bent over the contents of the second bag. Hoskam colored and demanded—

"Are you doubting me, sir?"

"Never, Mr. Hoskam," was the prompt reply. "But if ever I saw a guilty man it's the prisoner. Look at him now!"

On hearing this speech Old Idaho sat more erect and began to fight to regain his self control. The instinct of self-preservation was urging him to be careful. His natural cunning was considerable. His first effort was to conceal his amazement at Hoskam's verdict. All eyes swerved to the old man at Riply's words, then darted back to the table. Hoskam began examining the third bag.

"Good as the wheat," he ruled.

The remaining three bags were found to be equally desirable.

"I told you there wan't no worthless dust in this place," mumbled Old Idaho with a weak attempt to appear righteously indignant.

"We've lost a lot of time and taken a heap of trouble for nothing," declared a disgusted idler.

"It's never time lost to clear a man of a criminal charge," Gorman barked at him.

Riply smiled and minced toward the door, remarking over his shoulder—

"You seem to be unfortunate in getting your evidence, sheriff."

"Ferd Patterson lost twenty ounces through him," hotly replied the sheriff.

"He's a low-down murderer," scoffed Old Idaho.

Curks caught Bowen's eye and ponderously announced.

"If the matter was within my jurisdiction I should release the accused on his own recognizance. Patterson isn't in position to appear against him—yet."

"What good does it do to keep him cooped up?" said Gorman. "I've talked with those who were suspicious of him a bit back. They can only say—except that skunk Patterson—that some one dumped some counterfeit dust on them. They can't swear it was Old Idaho. Counterfeit dust had been worked off all over the Territory. Right now there's more than a score of counterfeiters within a short distance of Idaho City and Boise."

The others began to talk and Curks drew Bowen aside and whispered:

"Turn him loose, you fool. He'll stay down here. Mushet and Burnham will jump him as soon as we can get word to them. Once they get him back in the hills they'll learn everything. We couldn't ask for a better chance."

The sheriff turned back to the vociferous group and warmly declared:

"I'm mighty glad it's turned out this way. Judge Curks shows how foolish it would be to hold Idaho on the say-so of a man up for murder. He's free on the understanding he'll

report at Idaho City if it turns out we need to question him again."

"Report in town? Why shouldn't I? I shall be up there a-plenty without being called," excitedly assured the old man. "Didn't I tell you I didn't have any make-believe dust? Acted guilty, did I? That rat of a fool can't tell the difference between being guilty and being scared. I was scared. Yes, sirree! I was mortal afraid some of you would pouch that dust, and I ain't putting it beyond men built like Riply to do that same thing."

A shout of laughter greeted this remark! Riply smiled in an ugly fashion and suggested.

"Better send that dust to town. If you keep it here you'll lose it. Then they'll be accusing me of taking it, seeing what a bad name you've given me."

This evoked another laugh. Old Idaho scratched his beard thoughtfully, and with a cunning leer said, "I don't go for to lose it. Will you take it to town for me, Mr. Riply. And give it to Mr. Crafts, of Crafts and Vantine. He'll put it in his safe for me."

Without a word Riply pocketed three bags and passed the other three to Gorman. The men began withdrawing to their horses. Curks lingered behind, but found Gorman equally reluctant to depart. Gorman wanted to know if the old man could get along alone, and advised his going to Idaho City until he could be joined by his granddaughter.

"I'll stay here. When she comes back she'll look for me here," Idaho told him.

Gorman also wished to inquire about Shoshoni Hale, but did not dare while Curks was hovering in the background. Riply came to the open window and informed:

"There's a boy fording the river above here. His nag seems badly blown."

Old Idaho gave a little cry—Gorman could not tell whether it was based on fear or joy—and ran from the room. The men in the road were watching a slim figure urging a weary horse up the river bank.

"It's Harry!" faintly cried the old Man.

"His granddaughter," Gorman replied to Riply's inquiring look.

The sheriff whispered to Curks. Down the road trotted the girl. On beholding her grandfather she whipped the horse into a shambling gallop. Riding into the center of the group she sprang down and flung her arms about the old man's neck and glared defiance at the spectators.

"What are these men doing here with you, granddaddy?" she fiercely demanded.

"It'll all right, honey," quieted the old man. "Them derned fool yarns about me passing counterfeit dust are all buried so deep that they won't ever crop out again. They've come and found my dust is all right. Now I'm to be left in peace."

"You cowards!" gritted the girl. "You can't find any better business than to be pestering an old man! If you're through with your work I wish you'd go."

Riply's thin face turned pink, but he lost no time in mounting his horse. As the cavalcade started for home Gorman, the last in line, leaped down and ran back to the girl and eagerly asked:

"Shoshoni Hale? My friend? Where is he?"

She fought back her tears and sadly explained, "I waited for him to return. But he didn't come. Then the Indian, Black Cloud, dreamed. Dreamed that Shoshoni Hale was in trouble. He said he must go at once. He left me. I don't know where he went. He said he was going to make a smoke."

CHAPTER XI

OVER THE RIM OF THE BASIN

IT WAS midnight when Hale hitched his mare to a rack back of the Heffron and Pitt store. He was wearing the long serape over his mountain dress and on his head was the cumbersome Mexican hat. Gorman's message that the three men were in town made his errand very definite. Now he had no fear of being recognized before locating the Danites unless it be by Gorman. He hoped Gorman was at his room, or playing dominoes at Kinney's place. From what Gorman had told him on his last visit he was led to believe Mushet and his companions would be found at the Gold Dust Saloon, but he purposed to take the resorts as they stood.

He walked to the rear of the saloon where he had first stopped when arriving in town from Boise City. He did not enter for he could see all the patrons through the window. There were bearded faces, but neither pendulous beard, nor long drooping mustache. Weber Joe would be with his friends. It was Joe who had given Judge Curks the Danite signal in the Boise City courtroom. The majority of men, entering and

leaving store or saloon, or walking the streets, had not used a razor for many months. But Hale was strangely contented; two were easily identified, and he had but to ask to have Weber Joe pointed out to him by any street lounger if the third man was present.

He walked up the back street and halted at every rear window and as he had expected found no trace of his quarry. Yet his medicine was trying to tell him, he firmly believed, that this was his night, and he pursued his search confidently. On reaching the back of the Gold Dust Saloon he halted long enough to make sure his guns were loose under his cloak and then swiftly gained the front entrance.

As he stood in the shadows beyond the door he was a nondescript figure, the serape muffling his tall form and concealing the mountain dress. Several sons of Old Mexico drifted by as he waited. Once he thought he glimpsed Jack Gorman coming down the street, and he drew back against the wall. His was a lone fight, and Gorman was too fine a fellow to be drawn into trouble. He would have rested easier on this point had he known that Gorman was out of town, on his way to Old Idaho's cabin. Feeling that his serape, muffling him to the mouth, and the big hat shading his face made him unrecognizable he ventured to lounge into the light streaming from one of the front windows. For ten minutes he watched the interior of the long room. He searched the face of each patron and was about to turn away when a familiar voice sent his hand inside his serape to clutch a revolver.

He did not turn his head. The owner of the voice passed behind him and halted on the threshold of the saloon. It was Ferdinand Patterson. With him was a deputy sheriff, his badge worn conspicuously. In this amiable fashion was the gambler deprived of his freedom by the law.

Patterson's entrance was greeted by many boisterous voices. Yet there were some men who eyed him gravely. The gambler smiled and bowed. Then he seemed to sense the slight undercurrent of hostility and his pale face hardened. It was as if the silence of the minority had drowned the warm welcome of his admirers. He spoke to his guard and the deputy led the way down the bar and into the gaming-hall.

Hale slipped around the corner and ran to the rear of the building and gained a side window. The end of the hall was partitioned off and formed sleeping-quarters for Patterson before Pinkham's murder transferred him to the jail. A score of men and as many painted women were in the hall, grouped about the various tables. When Hale took up his position they were gazing at the closed door of Patterson's room and the gambler was not in sight.

Hale's Indian training permitted him to remain with great patience, and at last he was rewarded by the entrance of a man, dressed like a miner and yet with boots too polished for a miner. Hale felt a thrill through his whole being as he noted the face lost in hair. That the newcomer was some one of importance in the estimation of the habitués of the place was evidenced by the behavior of the women. These clustered around him and yet took no liberties. Ignoring the women, he turned and asked a question of a man at the roulette wheel. On receiving his answer he walked rapidly to Patterson's door and knocked. The door opened and he disappeared.

Hale knew he had looked on Weber Joe, and his two hands were half-raised and his fingers clinched as he unconsciously went through the pantomime of strangling his secret enemy. The sound of some one approaching from the back street sent him from the window. He walked toward the intruder, staggering and mumbling the few words of Spanish he knew. The man passed him in the darkness and cursed him for a drunken greaser and threatened him with violence for taking up all the room.

At the end of the building Hale met with a set-back. The window was high up and closely curtained. The top of his head came even with the bottom sill, and by placing his ear against the sash he could catch a murmur of voices and the little metallic clink of glasses; but no more.

Growing desperate, as he realized the precious hours were slipping away while he was still hiding in the shadows, he hastened to the front of the saloon and glanced through the window again, preliminary to entering and seeking Weber Joe. As he gazed he stiffened and thrust a hand under his serape. A man with a long thin beard of the color of ruby silver was in the act of seating himself at a table close to the window. With him, his profile to the window, stood a man whose long

mustache hung below the chin. The two had just entered, apparently.

They seated themselves and rested their elbows on the table and leaned forward to talk earnestly. Hale patted his guns and pulled the big hat well forward and, holding the serape across the lower part of his face, moved to the entrance. Drunken voices were raised in song and profanity. As if summoned by a signal a dozen women entered from the gambling-hall and scattered among the tables.

It was while all eyes were on the women that Hale entered and glided to a table in the corner. His appearance was that of a Mexican dandy, and as he pulled a bag of gold from his blouse and dropped it on the table several lynx-eyed women decided he was promising game and made for him.

One was a mixed blood, with eyes that flamed with drink. As she glided toward Hale she needs must pass close to the table Hale was watching. The man with the long spindle of a beard reached out a hand and caught her wrist and pulled her down beside him. With the snarl of a wild-cat she darted a hand to her stocking after a knife, but the man caught it and, bringing both her hands together, placed them on the table and covered them with one of his.

He said something to her from the corner of his mouth and the feline glare faded from her dark eyes and she cowered at his side. The two men continued their talk, the prisoner sitting sullenly between them. Of the others only one succeeded in reaching Hale, her companions being captured by the intervening tables.

Hale waved to a waiter and two glasses of liquor were promptly served. The woman smiled, the layers of paint making her face a ghastly mask, and sought to find a welcome in Hale's eyes. His eyes were all that were visible, the wide hatbrim and the serape eliminating the rest of his features. There was something in his steady stare that unnerved her. With an uneasy laugh she said—

"You've had a hard time on the road, or up in the hills, Señor Dearie?"

He nodded, and added—

"It's worse luck to see a critter like that paw over a handsome girl and make her stop with him when she don't want to." And he nodded toward the mixed-blood.

His companion's face twitched nervously, and in a hoarse whisper she warned. "For ——'s sake don't let them hear you! You're no greaser."

"The greaser who wore this cloak is dead," was the grim reply.

Her eyes grew round and she edged back, yet did not offer to leave.

"Who are you, dearie?" she whispered.

"For all you know I'm Jem Helm," replied Hale with a silent little laugh.

"No!" she hissed. "You're not Helm. Who are you?"

"I'm the man who doesn't care if they hear me at the half-breed woman's table."

She shivered as if cold and muttered—

"We don't talk like that in here, dearie."

"What's to hinder?" he asked, all the time watching the two men and the breed.

"You're new to our ways, dearie. You don't know the ropes. Let Annie look after you," she coaxed. "Those are bad men to stir up. Now be good, or I'll run away from you."

Hale produced a fat nugget from the bag before him and rolled it about idly. The woman watched his long fingers with wolfish eyes and playfully attempted to take the nuggets, coaxing—

"Let Annie keep it for you, dearie."

He imprisoned her clutching fingers and demanded:

"Why do you call them bad? One looks like a goat to me."

"Hush! Hush!" she whispered, her eyes dilating in terror; and she made no further efforts to secure the nuggets. "Keep your mouth shut, you fool! That's Tod Mushet, from Salt Lake City. The women don't like him. We don't like West Burnham, either. That's Burnham with him. They ain't fond of love-making like honest miners. They're just cruel."

"Mormons, eh? Didn't know Mormons was fire-eaters," muttered Hale.

"There's lots of nice Mormons," the woman conceded, renewing her efforts to secure the nugget. "But them two are different. See the handle of that knife in Mushet's boot? He'd pull it on a woman as quick as he would on a man."

"Then he's a —— coward!"

"No, no, dearie! He's just cruel. He likes to use the knife. He likes to see folks suffer. They tell awful stories 'bout him and Burnham and Weber Joe. Joe's in the back room now. Some say he's the worst of the three. God pity us if he's worse'n them two."

"Oughter run 'em out of town," growled Hale. "On t'other side of the Bitter Root range they wouldn't last long."

"Hush, dearie. Annie's your friend. She knows what she's talking about. You're from the Beaver Head country. You don't know what she knows." She was begging of him, her voice trembling. "If they knew you was talking that way about them they'd have your throat open quicker'n it takes 'Monte Bill' to rig a hand for a tenderfoot."

Hale made a pretense of drinking. The woman sipped her glass and palmed the nugget. Hale did not appear to notice her slight of hand, but the mixed-blood did, and, infuriated because of the easy prey she was losing, she suddenly attempted to escape from the table. Instantly Mushet caught her by her braid of black hair and yanked her back into her chair. She groaned and dropped her head on her arms.

Hale rose to his feet and pushed the bag of dust toward his companion and in a low voice said,

"Keep it. And git out of here. I'm going to see if your blood-thirsty friends have any fighting talk to make to a man from the Beaver Head country."

She tried to detain him, but he shook her off. Wide-eyed with fright, she clutched the bag to her bosom and scurried to the bar to tell the bartender that a crazy miner from over the mountains was bent on picking a quarrel with Tod Mushet. Before she had imparted this information Hale had glided over to the Mormon's table and leered down at the mixed-blood and said,

"Little *señorita* want to git away?"

The woman lifted her head and stared at him blankly. Burnham gave him no heed. Mushet glanced up, his eyes glowing with a yellowish light.

"Vamoose, you —— greaser! Vamoose while you can."

Hale walked half around the table as if retreating, but when behind the girl he seized her chair and with one effort lifted it half a dozen feet from the table and tilted her out on the floor. She lit on her feet like a cat, and at the same moment Hale dropped into the chair, his back toward the bar lights, one hand resting loosely in his lap, the other holding the serape across his chin.

Mushet and Burnham viewed him in bewilderment. Before their rage could break loose the hand holding the serape was shoved upward until the ear was locked between the thumb and first finger—the Danite sign of recognition. Mechanically the two men did likewise. By this time the woman Annie had told the news to the group at the bar, and as the word was whispered over the room the ribaldry ceased and all eyes were turned expectantly on the table. But the spectators were disappointed. The miner from the Beaver Head country did not seem to be unwelcome at the table, for the three men were sitting quiet enough.

"Who are you to make that sign?" whispered Mushet, trying to peer beneath the broad hatbrim and beholding only a pair of eyes.

"Oh, I know that sign," chuckled Hale.

"You're no greaser!" hissed Burnham.

"The one who wore this rig is dead," softly laughed Hale. "The sign? I've seen it given in the Saints' country. Down in Springfield in the old days. More killings there by the Sword of Gideon than in any other part of Utah, considering the population. I remember in 'Fifty-nine that there was a man named Harris who was killed on what's now the Idaho border."

The two exchanged startled glances, then concentrated their attention on the intruder. Burnham softly said—

"You're either a very brave man, or a crazy one, to come to us like this."

"And give that sign," amended Mushet in a low whisper.

"Along of mentioning the name of the man Harris," hissed Hale, dropping the corner of his serape and allowing the bosom of his fringed shirt to show.

For a few moments the two were silent and rigid, their eyes focused on the hands now pushing the serape back to rest near the hips. Then Burnham said:

"Yes, we remember Harris. He was blood-atoned. But what made you come here? Not that you could escape your father's fate by changing your name and living in the mountains; but why seek it?"

"I was here a few nights ago, but you were in Boise City. I'm tired of running away," was the calm answer. "You fellows have been hounding me a bit close lately, so I thought I'd take time off and meet you. I never could find out who you were till lately."

Both Burnham and Mushet sat with their

hands gripping the edge of the table. Both cast side glances toward the closed door of the gambling-hall. Hale noticed this and laughed noiselessly, warning:

"If he comes in it's your death sentence. I know he's in the back room with Patterson."

"You know him?" asked Burnham.

"Weber Joe? Bless you, yes."

Mushet slowly lifted a hand and smoothed his long beard, but taking care to end the caressing gesture above the table. He curiously inquired—

"Where did you learn that sign?"

"My father showed me when we were trying to escape. He told me always to beware of a man who made that sign," gritted Hale.

"But you could have kept in hiding, or gone to some other part of the country—gone East," continued Mushet.

"I've told you. I'm tired of running away. Tired of being dogged. Tired of being afraid that every stranger I meet will murder me when I sleep, or when I'm not looking. I could have shot you through the window. I should have done so if I wasn't anxious to know why you killed my father."

"He was an apostate," grumbled Burnham, showing his first bit of emotion.

"He was worse than that," added Mushet harshly. "You are brave to come in here like this. You shall have the whole truth before you die. He was appointed to serve as a Son of Dan. He was initiated and taught the token. Then he weakened and fled. As an apostate he might have been reinstated after showing repentance. But as a betrayer of our purging band he was sentenced to pass over the rim of the basin. His sin could only be washed out in his blood. By killing him we saved his soul."

"The sentence was 'root and branch'," gently mused Hale.

Both men nodded slowly.

"I am glad to know about my father," Hale continued, and still speaking softly. "He was good to me. I never could imagine him having anything to do with cowardly murderers. Before he died he told me he was sorry he ever joined. Of course he was sincere when he joined it, and never dreamed of the evil it covered. You know I went back to him while you were chasing me in the bush?"

Neither of the men attempted to conceal their surprise. Hale smiled and said—

"You know it now."

"This is not a good place to talk it over," murmured Burnham, his eyes still focused on Hale's hands. "Suppose we go somewhere, where we can be alone, and arrive at some understanding? I am sure the church will be satisfied with one blood-atoned. Conditions have changed during the last few years."

"You think the sentence could be changed; that I may not be bothered any more?" asked Hale.

Burnham bowed his head, and Mushet added:

"I'm sure of it. Suppose we go upstairs——"

"Squat!" hissed Hale, his fingers coiling around the handle of his right hand gun.

Mushet slumped back in his chair, his yellow eyes flashing a query at Burnham. The latter now took a different course and reminded Hale:

"There's a price on your head for killing Lucky Tom. There's also the matter of Sydney Bill. I'm honest enough to say I don't think they can make the last charge stick. But there's no doubt about the first."

"How many of you were there when Tom was killed?" Hale asked.

"Three," readily replied Burnham. "We saw you for a second as you stood by the road. We left our horses and followed you, as we supposed. When we reached the fire we saw your mare. It rather puzzled us to find you wrapped in blankets and crouching like a sick man before the fire. You'd had plenty of time to get back and into the blankets, but you had seemed wide-awake and in good health when you showed up at the road."

"I didn't go back to the camp. I went to the crick to git Tom's horse," explained Hale.

"I see," mused Burnham. "It has sort of kept us guessing. We knew it must be something like that, or else that you knew we were coming and ran for it."

"You cursed dogs!" muttered Hale, the veins on his neck swelling. "At least you now know I didn't run. You begin to suspect now I'm not afraid to meet you."

"Let's not get personal," urged Mushet. "Fact is, the killing of Lucky Tom is fastened onto you."

Hale scowled and was silent for a bit. Then he said:

"As I make it out you men are the only

ones who can clear me of the charge. If I kill you then it always will be held against me. I'll always be hunted for it."

"Exactly," murmured Mushet, again stroking his beard.

"But how did you make it appear I was with Lucky Tom at all?"

"Jem Helm robbed you. You arrived here with plenty of dust. When they dug Lucky Tom's body up there was no dust on it. Then again we said we saw you camping with the miner. Of course it was generally known how you got him to ride away from Boise City and then followed at his heels."

"The case is strong," sighed Hale. "If I kill you then I won't have any chance to prove you did it."

"Naturally not," said Burnham, his long mustache wriggling like two vipers as he smiled into the puzzled face.

"So I say let's get out of this crowd and talk it over," urged Mushet. "I reckon we can fix it to show we was mistook about your being with the miner. We are good friends with the sheriff."

"Wait a moment," warned Hale. "There's another way out of it."

The two nerved themselves for the crisis which they knew would terminate the strange interview. From the instant they recognized Hale they knew it must be to the death, and they had killed time in hope that the third man would put in an appearance.

"There's three of you, not counting Curks, who may have been told things by some of you," slowly continued Hale.

Mushet's long beard jerked sharply. Burnham wet his lips. The mention of Curks had affected them. Hale grimaced and jeered:

"So Curks may know something about it, eh? But to make it safe say I save one of the three who were there. He can confess and that'll lift the charge against me."

"Forcing a confession from a son of the Church, from Weber Joe of all others, would be mighty hard, we reckon," said Mushet, his words coming as if jolted from him.

"It would be hard ordinarily," conceded Hale, his tone as inconsequential as if he were discussing the price of flour. "But I have a friend, one of the northern Shoshoni. He has a way, I believe, of making a man talk."

"That would mean you would have to catch your man first," muttered Burnham.

"Now I know him by sight that wouldn't be hard. If he quits the town my Indian friend would pick him up inside of twenty-four hours."

Mushet and Burnham had hoped some one in the room would recognize the young man, who sat with his hat pushed back, his chair clear of the table so as to give him plenty of room for drawing a weapon. But the serape and the big Mexican hat entirely changed Hale's appearance. Jack Gorman would have known him could he look through the window and secure a glance at the lean face; but Hale's back was toward most of the drink-flushed men, and the serape covered his mountain dress.

Mushet snapped his eyes and Burnham's fingers ceased their idle tapping on the table and grew rigid. Hale smiled at the little byplay and informed: "No need of taking foolish chances; so don't close your eyes again, Mushet. I came here to kill you two. I could have shot you through the window, or as you were leaving the place. But I am not a Son of Dan. Now listen and be careful to do as I say, or I shall have to shoot you in cold blood. You will rise and stand with your backs to me. Then I will turn my back on you. When I say "Go!" the three of us will dive for our guns, wheel and fire."

Burnham's pupils dilated; but Mushet sneered, "When you say 'go' you will have drawn and be ready to shoot us as we turn."

"You dirty dog!" whispered Hale, and he thrust his thin face forward. "You low, brutal, cruel dog. You don't deserve the shadow of a chance."

"Hold on! We accept!" yelped Burnham. Then to Mushet:

"He's got the say. If he wants to shoot us he can do it before we make a move, Tod. If I get out of this I'll never sit down close to a table again. He's well back and got plenty of room. We'd be over the rim of the basin before we could start for our guns. Harris, or Hale, go ahead and give the word."

Hale directed:

"Keep your hands well up and shove your chairs back. When I stand up, you stand up and fold your arms. Then turn with your backs to me and drop your hands to your sides. But don't make a move till I say 'go,' for until you hear the word you'll

not know whether I've got my back to you, or am watching you."

The men worked their chairs back from the table. From the other tables came shouts of drunken laughter and the shrill exclamations of the women. The woman to whom Hale had given the dust, was making friends with a miner across the room, but as she smirked and whispered her gaze was continually wandering to the three men. She beheld them rise as if to separate and she breathed in deep relief.

The Danites stood with their arms loosely folded. Hale had his thumbs hooked into his heavy belt. The two slowly turned and faced the windows. Their foreheads were wet with sweat, and Burnham drew a deep breath to smother the heavy pounding of his heart. He expelled his breath with a slight hissing sound as he found a window afforded him something of a mirror in which he could detect Hale's first move to change his position. Their hands fell at their sides.

Hale observed the reflection in the window and frowned. He did not direct them to change their position, however. There were no tables between them and the wall, and if they shot straight there would be no damage done to outsiders. With his hands on his hips he suddenly spun about, and when back to them cried—

"Go!"

And the same impetus that carried him half-around allowed him to complete the circle. But the two had been alert and wheeled when he began to turn.

The .36 in Hale's right hand boomed twice, and between the shots came the crack of Burnham's lighter weapon. Mushet went down with his gun drawn and cocked. Burnham fell across the table, feebly trying to recock his weapon. Hale discovered his left arm was numb and useless. He shoved his right-hand gun into the holster and took the gun from his left hand and leaped toward the door. Burnham rolled off the table and fell with a crash, dead beside his partner. It was then that men recovered from their stupor and sprang from tables or dived under them, that women screamed and the bartenders dropped behind the log barricade forming the front of the bar.

As Hale backed to the door Patterson and his guard burst into the room. Directly behind them came Weber Joe. Patterson, quick of eye and as quick of wit, recognized Hale, who stood framed in the doorway, and with a yell snatched a gun from the deputy and fired. Hale fired back and missed and before he could shoot again Patterson had pulled the deputy in front of him. Weber Joe hurled the gambler and his man aside and began walking down the long room, his thick beard bristling. Hale hesitated and half-lowered his gun as he remembered the need of leaving one of the Danites alive to exonerate him. Weber Joe misinterpreted the reticence and laughed hoarsely and made his advance more slow and deliberate.

"It's Shoshoni Hale!" yelled Patterson. "Git him, Joe!"

But the gambler himself made no further attempt to mix in the affair.

"I'll git him. I want him!" loudly announced Weber Joe.

The room quieted down. Over the edge of each table peered fascinated, frightened eyes.

"Losing your nerve?" taunted Weber Joe, barely moving his feet, so keen was his desire to play with his victim.

"Mushet and Burnham are dead behind the table at the front window," informed Hale. "Have I lost my nerve?"

"He killed them! He killed them!" screamed a woman's voice.

With a howl of rage Weber Joe threw up his gun and at the same moment Hale began firing, his first bullet breaking the fellow's shoulder, the remaining four catching the heavy body until the man went down shot through and through. With the last shot Hale leaped through the door and slammed it shut and raced around the corner of the building and into the back street. He reached his pony and made for the Centerville road. Now the cries of the mob and the shrieks of the women were drawing every one indoors out into the streets. The very pandemonium served as a cover for Hale to escape.

"What is it? What has happened?" shouted those citizens who knew nothing of the truth.

"Shoshoni Hale's come back and murdered half a dozen men!" bellowed a frequenter of the Gold Dust bar.

Once in the Centerville road Hale rapidly left the clamor behind him. It was dangerously near dawn when he rode through the town. Two miles beyond the town he found a secluded spot and went breakfastless to bed. He awoke near twilight and saw

a dozen heavily armed men down in the road. They were riding toward Centerville and had come from Placerville. He was much puzzled at not beholding Sheriff Bowen among them.

Satisfied that the search to the westward had spent itself, he rode to Placerville and, skirting the town, struck into the river road. Overhead the stars, each a blaze of light, went about their eternal errands. Beside the road some insect life chirruped shrilly. He wondered what kind of a fairy-story Miss Harry would weave out of these bits of heaven and earth.

Now that he felt assured of making the sanctuary of the gulch he took time to review the tragedy. He could not make it seem real that the unseen evil was ended, that never again need he take to flight to escape from the shadows. At first he regretted the death of Weber Joe and wished he could have spared him until the fellow had confessed the truth about Lucky Tom's death. But as he passed on to Curks' intimacy with the Danites and decided the Boise City judge must know the truth about the miner's death he was glad Weber Joe had gone along with his evil mates.

He knew he must rest long and soundly before he could think adequately. The strain of meeting Mushet and Burnham and guarding against their every move had told on him. He felt weak and exhausted although he had slept the greater part of the day. It was as if some deadly poison had seeped into his system. But he had sought out and faced his father's murderers, and he exulted. It had been a double vengeance. It paid, so far as blood can pay, the score set up by his father's death, and in a measure it made up for Lucky Tom's death.

But despite his victory he knew Shoshoni Hale was a marked man until he could establish his innocence in regard to the miner's demise. If, by accident, any one should stumble upon Lost Gulch, then the whole Boise basin would be convinced he had murdered the original owner after learning the secret of his diggings.

AS HE rode through the early morning light to pass through the grapevines he was startled by the abrupt appearance of Black Cloud, mounted. As they met Hale gave a realistic description of his experience in Idaho City. As the Indian listened his nostrils pinched in, his small black eyes glittered; and he grunted loudly as he grasped the dramatic values of the strange encounter.

As Hale finished and would have asked whither he was going the Indian hoarsely declared:

"My white brother is turning red. He is a great warrior. He shall be adopted among my people. He shall have a song made up about him. He shall have a head-dress that reaches to his heels, and each feather shall count as a coup, even as the Sioux warrior counts his kills."

"Where do you go, and why do you leave the girl-boy alone?" asked Hale.

"The girl-boy is back in the lodge of the old man. He is there. They let him go free from the strong lodge in Idaho City."

TO BE CONCLUDED

Fool's Luck

By Frederick Moore

Author of "A Bit of Local Color," "White Man's Magic," etc.

THE beginning of it begun when Cap'n Coddles told me that the island of Malabang was for sale. Coddles didn't have any money, but he had considerable intellect. You remember Cap'n Coddles—him that could take himself apart, what with him having a glass eye, false teeth and a wig of hair.

It was while I was still mating for him in the schooner *Laughing Jane* that I went into partnership with him on owning the island. It was a regular, tropical island, too, with jungles in it full of parrots and snakes, and a river that was full of crocodiles, and a volcano on it—one of these islands such as folks get shipwrecked on and et by the natives. Only Malabang had no natives—except for monkeys.

"Faggin," says Coddles to me one day in Manila aboard the *Laughing Jane*. "Faggin, I've got an idea."

"What are you reading?" I asks him.

"I'm reading here," says he, "a love-story paper from the United States. I see a chance to make us both rich."

"That's the kind of an idea I've been after for a long time," says I. "What is it?"

"There's an advertisement here," he goes on, "that says we can git from Chicago all the Confederate money we want if we'll send two dollars good money for a thousand dollars Confederate."

"That's a whale of an idea for gettin' rich," said I, "—for the bird who prints the Confederate money."

"But I'm thinking of us," says Coddles.

"You're too late by about fifty years," says I. "Didn't you know that Jeff Davis was dead?"

"Faggin, if you had less re-party and more understanding about financial things, you wouldn't have to be mate of the *Laughing Jane*. Can you lend me ten dollars?"

"I don't know much about finance," says I, "but I notice I'm the only one with any money aboard this packet."

"Shut your face," says he pleasantly, "and listen to me. Old Dato Dammang, a native chief down in the Sulu Islands, is gittin' civilized enough to want money. He'll sell the island of Malabang for five thousand dollars—and we're going to buy it. You'll own half, and be my prime minister."

"You're so generous," says I, "that I wonder you've got an extra pair of pants. As I see this scheme of yours, I'm to supply the money, and you'll let me have a job. That's so I'll be handy to lend you money for fool schemes, I suppose."

"Being from New England," says he, "you're too cautious about money. Nobody ever got anywhere without taking a chance."

"Oh, yes they do—most of 'em gits in front of a judge and behind bars. I don't like to have the doors locked when I'm asleep, that's all. You go ahead and be a cannibal king if you want to—I'll hunt a job in a gas-works."

"Pipe down!" he growls. "Just you hark to me! I don't want to raise your hopes with extravagant statements, but you'll have more money than you know what to do with."

"Fool's Luck," copyright, 1921, by Frederick Moore.

"That's a conservative statement," says I, "so I'm willing to listen to the rest. I don't eat opium, nor nothing like that. I don't have to, as long as I can listen to you talk."

"That island of Malabang is full of monkeys——"

"And that's where we belong," I breaks in, trying to be smart.

"Full of monkeys," resumes Coddles. "And the river is so full of crocodiles that you can't see the banks on a sunny day, with all the days sunny."

"I'm for it," says I, "if you'll promise to go in swimming in that river."

"We can anchor the schooner in the river, and live aboard," Coddles goes ahead. "There's a volcano that makes plenty of light on dark nights, and that'll save us kerosene. There's plenty of fruit and fish to eat and——"

"And the monkeys to talk to," says I, liking my little joke now and then.

"We'll buy that island," continued Coddles, giving me a mean look with his glass eye, "and go down there, and our ding-danged fortunes is made!"

"Where will we keep all the money we makes looking at the scenery?" I asks.

"I'm coming to that," says Coddles. "The monkeys feed themselves. The crocodiles knock the monkeys off the banks of the river with their tails and——"

"Stop!" says I. "We're both descended from monkeys, and I ain't going to have no hand in watching crocodiles pick on 'em!"

"And we catch the crocodiles and skin 'em and sell the skins," Coddles goes on. "As to the crocs living on monkeys, we won't be interfering none with nature. That's going on right now, and I don't see you losing no sleep over it. But if we kill off all the crocs and make enough money to go to Paris and live on French cooking, we'll be doing the monkeys of Malabang a kindness at the same time."

"Well, that's different," I admits. "If it's a case of helping out your relations——"

"That ain't all," resumed Coddles in a hurry. "The parrots in the jungles will be a side-line. When we ain't skinning crocs, you can be catching parrots and learning 'em to talk polite. Then we'll sell 'em."

"If they have to listen to your language when you're out of temper in this schooner," says I, "where'll we sell 'em? Only in saloons and state prisons, maybe; but that's a small market now."

"It won't do 'em no harm to pick up from me a few pictureskew remarks," says Coddles. "Lend me that ten dollars."

It was easier for me to give up the ten dollars than to listen to Coddles argue. I hoped by the time the Confederate money arrived, he'd be crazy in another way.

I'LL say the paper cash looked good when it arrived—one thousand five-dollar bills, it was, with the figures good and big so the Dato Dammang could count it easy. So we filled away for the dato's place, to buy Malabang.

"What," I asks Coddles on the way down to Tangeru where the dato lived, "will happen if some wise guy tells the dato this money is only good for curiosity purposes?"

"He never lets people tell him his money ain't good," says Coddles. "That's one of the advantages of being a native chief. All we need is time enough to git all the crocs, anyway. Besides, the dato never lets loose of money if he can help it—he'll hide this up under the roof of his bamboo palace and the mice'll eat it, or the rain'll spoil it, or the dato'll git a knife let in him, or drink poison with his coffee."

"More advantages in being a native chief," says I. "But what if them things don't happen?"

"Don't you never trust to luck?" asks Coddles. "I do."

"Now I know why they say a fool has luck," says I. "There's nothing personal in that, cap'n."

"Of course not," says Coddles. "But you forget that when the dato tells his people that this stuff is money, that's all he needs to do. If they don't believe him, he'll make slaves of 'em. Anyway, he'll give this money out for what he buys from his natives, and then he'll take it away from 'em again with taxes. Didn't I tell you he's gitting civilized?"

"Hope," says I, "just busts out on you like freckles."

WHEN we anchored off the dato's village, Coddles goes ashore with my imitation pigskin grip full of the Confederate money. He comes back with a deed that was partly written and partly painted on a blank leaf out of Hoyle's poker book, and signed with the dato's thumbmark.

I read the part that was in English—

"To my brothers, Coddles and Faggin, haves the island of Malabang as long as they lifes."

"Look here!" I roared, when I read the date on the bottom. "This gives the year to be 1319! That dato is either a ghost, or he's had the sleeping sickness a long time. That was back before Columbus was born."

"That's your iggerance!" snorts Coddles. "Don't you know these Moros figures time like Arabs? Read it all— 'Written this eighth day of the moon, *Jul Kaadah*, in the year 1319.' That's today."

"Fat lot of good that does us," says I. "What if——"

"Oh, shut up!" said Coddles. "It's thirteen hundred and nineteen years since Mohammed was born."

"Since he left home, you mean," I puts in.

"Anything to keep you still," says Coddles. "It's wonderful to be so educated that you don't know nothing. Git up the anchor."

With that we sail for Malabang. Late that night, having a good wind, I saw a light dead ahead in a lonesome part of the ocean. I called Coddles. He squinted at the light over the cabin-trunk.

"That's our island," says Coddles. "It's the volcano!"

"Looks like there was a Fourth of July celebration going on," says I, for the whole sky was lit up.

"Makes it easy to find," says Coddles.

"I hope it don't keep the crocodiles awake nights," says I. "They ought to git plenty of sleep nights, to grow well."

"That's when they feed, nights," said Coddles. "They'll be whoppers, because they don't have no trouble finding their grub in that light. And we can work two shifts catching 'em."

THE next morning we had the island close aboard. There it was, sticking up into the sky, smoking like a brick-foundry, and covered with the greenest and thickest jungle I'd ever seen. The most of it appeared to be standing on edge, till we coasted down and then we saw a big valley and the river.

We worked the schooner up into the river. It was all fringed with mangrove trees and palms and tree-ferns and blossoming vines and bamboo groves, with swamps along the sides. The trees was so full of monkeys they had to take turns on the limbs. And the whole place was full of parrots, just like Coddles said. Only I didn't see no crocodiles.

"The dato has skinned us!" says I, looking at the bank off our starboard beam. "He's sold the place to somebody else, and there's a lumber-mill in here somewhere."

"Lumber-mill!" says Coddles with a start. "I don't see no signs of a lumber-mill!"

"Look at them big logs laying along the banks," says I.

Coddles laughed scornful.

"You ding-danged fool!" says he. "Them ain't logs—them's our crocodiles taking a nap after being up all night."

"Crocodiles!" says I, my eyes bulging out, as I looked closer. "Yes, them may be crocs, but to me they look more like these dinnysores they have stuffed in museums so folks can see what kind of monsters was crawling around on earth before Adam and his wife swiped apples in the orchards of the Garden of Edam."

"Edam?" says Coddles. "Ain't you thinking of cheese? But don't you see we're rich! One of them croc skins is worth anywhere from twenty-five dollars up to make satchels for ladies, after we've caught 'em and skinned 'em and salted 'em and shipped 'em and sold 'em."

"Yes, after," says I. "If we ain't been et by 'em before."

"You're a pessimism," says Coddles. "Let go the anchor and take a couple of the crew out in the dingey to sound for mud-bars in the river."

"Do I have to go close to shore?" asks I with a squint at the crocodile convention. Them crocs was twenty-five feet long if they was an inch, and mostly mouth and tail.

Coddles glared at me, but didn't say anything, and I took a couple of Filipinos and rowed up-stream. That made the parrots take notice, and they begins to yell in the trees. With that, the monkeys begins to chatter. The crocs woke up—and about five million of 'em jumped into the river. And one of 'em, that must have been the grandfather of 'em all, judging by his size, comes straight for the dingey with his nose in the air!

"*Wak-wak-wak!*" barks the others, like they was egging him on.

The Filipinos was scared stiff. They laid down in the bottom of the boat and begins

to pray. But the current moved us back toward the *Laughing Jane*. By this time that whole river was swarming with crocs, swashing their tails around and sticking their snouts up out of the muddy water to look us over.

"Throw me a line!" I yells to Coddles, as we comes floating down-stream. "These danged crocs are too friendly to suit me!"

Coddles heaves a line to me, and I grabs it to pull the dingey alongside.

"They're hungry," says Coddles.

"So I noticed," I remarks, and gets over the side of the schooner without losing no time.

"That's fine," says Coddles. "It'll be easy for you to catch 'em."

I gives Coddles a look.

The biggest croc comes whirling along, his head reared out of the water and his jaws open enough to throw a trunk into. He had bubble-eyes as big as coffee-mugs. And he kept gnashing his jaws and grinding his ninety-nine teeth.

"He's coming to be catched," says I. "You go out and feed him a piece of steak and bring him aboard when he ain't looking."

"He's laughing at you," says Coddles. "He knows you're afraid and it tickles him."

"Your wrong," says I. "He's laughing because he sees you and thinks you're a monkey."

"Crocs don't think," says Coddles. "They goes by instink."

"How he goes don't bother me none, just so long as he goes," I says. "I don't hanker to argue none with him. You're the crocodile expert. Me, I've got my own instink, and that's to give that gent all the room he wants."

"He wouldn't bite," says Coddles.

"Oh, no," says I. "Is he just yawning because the volcano kept him awake last night?"

"Have you got cold feet?" asks Coddles.

"I'm intending to keep 'em, cold or not," says I. "I notice you do the most of your talking aboard the schooner. Who was you aiming to be chief crocodile-catcher in this here expedition?"

Coddles looked hurt and sad. "Why, I was aiming to make you that. I've done all the mental work on this scheme, over and above your kicking about it."

"And I ain't stopped kicking yet, if you expect me to be the croc-killer. My ten dollars started this, and I'll say here and now that it looks from the road like I bought myself a special, fine collection of troubles with that ten dollars. It was known fifty years ago that Jeff Davis was a Jonah, and we should have kept clear of anything he had to do with. This is what comes of you reading them love-story papers."

"You ain't got no sense of humor!" snorts Coddles.

"The monkeys over in the trees have," says I. "They'll laugh themselves to death watching you chase crocodiles in the river."

Coddles busts out swearing something dreadful.

"There y' go!" says I. "Ruin my parrots!"

"Shut up about your ding-danged parrots!" yelps Coddles.

"No, sir," says I. "I'm the parrot expert here, and I'm going to keep to them as my specialty. I never did know anything about crocs, and I want to know less. That's your side of the business, cap'n."

Coddles swore some more and let it go at that. After we'd had dinner, he got me to help him rig some lines with shark-hooks, and the carpenter sawed up an old boom into blocks for floats.

By this time the crocs was all back on the banks of the river, sunning theirselves. We baited our lines that afternoon with salt pork, and Coddles went out in the dingey and set 'em.

"There!" says he when he come aboard. "The floats'll tell us when we've got a croc, and all we have to do is to bring the float into the schooner and take a turn around the capstan. Then we'll wind up the capstan, and the inch-rope'll bring him to us. By the time we have him hung from the bow, he'll be in no shape to make trouble."

"Not for me, he won't," says I. "I'll be busy with other things till you've cut his head off."

We sat up on deck that night in the light of the volcano and watched the floats. We heard the crocs splashing around, but we didn't get a bite—except for mosquitoes.

"Ding-dang the luck!" says Coddles. "We'll have to go back to Manila and bring elephant-guns to shoot 'em. They are more particular about what they eat than a Rooshan Finn third cook in a Norwegian collier!"

BUT in the morning just after daylight one of the floats just ahead of the *Laughing Jane* begins to go around in circles like it was fast to a mad hippopotamus.

"Thar she blows!" yells Coddles. "Mr. Faggin, put off in the dingey and bring that float aboard with the end of the line!"

I turns to Coddles and bows.

"Cap'n," says I, "the honor of the first croc is yourn. That's the boss croc of the river we saw yesterday, or I miss my guess. If you want him, you better hurry."

Coddles cursed, but he was afraid the float would be towed out of sight into the mangrove swamps and lost, so he hops into the dingey with a couple of hands and away they row to pick up the float. I waited in the bows of the schooner for 'em to pass the float up to me.

Coddles managed to get the float into the bows of the dingey. When the croc discovered that, he put a strain on the line—and the float stuck hard and fast in the eyes of the boat. The croc started up river on his high gear, and Coddles tried to throw the float away—but couldn't!

"I've got him!" yells Coddles back to me, as the dingey was leaving a wake behind her that looked like the wake of one of these big-engined torpedo-boats on a trial trip for speed.

"It looks to me like he's got you," I yells back, and the dingey made about fifteen knots an hour as she dug up the river.

I sat down and laughed myself into a misery in my side.

"Give me a knife!" yells Coddles to the Filipinos. He wanted to cut the rope, but there was no knife in the dingey.

"Tell him to put his helm hard over so he'll come back this way," I yells.

You'd think that croc heard me. He turns back in a wide circle and comes downstream to pass the schooner about fifty feet off. Coddles was standing in the bows trying to get loose the float. His hat was gone, and he was making dreadful remarks.

"Throw something at him!" yells Coddles. "This float is wedged in the ding-danged boat and I can't let loose of him!"

The croc's snout was sticking up out of the water. His tail was thrashing up the river like a mowing-machine run amuck, and Coddles was almost hidden in a stream of brown spume that splashed up over the bows. The dingey sure was ripping along.

"You'll be out of the river and in Borneo by night, cap'n," I yells.

"Ohyoucangoto——!" says Coddles.

"There was a feller, named Ben Hur, who got rich doing something like that in a chariot on the stage," says I.

"Do something, you ding-danged fool!" roars Coddles, as he goes rushing past.

"I am," says I. "I'm taking up ten dollars worth of amusement out of you catching crocodiles."

"I'll show you something if I ever git out of this mess!" yells Coddles.

"You have," says I. "You've showed me how to catch 'em."

The croc changed his course and made for a mangrove swamp just below the schooner. Coddles done his durndest to git rid of the float, not wanting to be drug on land by the croc, and not daring to jump overboard—but the float stuck. Then the croc dove into the overhanging vines of the mangroves—and the boat, the crew and Coddles followed the croc in, just like a bullet through soft butter.

On top of that disappearance-act, comes the finest bunch of yelling I ever heard—Coddles leading the chorus, but out of key. And the awfullest thrashing around in the bushes and mud—why, mud just spouted up over the tops of the trees like a geyser.

We got up the anchor and drifted down that way. When we was abeam of the bushes, I anchored again—close in.

"Have you got him?" I calls to Coddles, doing my best to make myself heard above the splashing mud and the ripping of vines and trees.

I couldn't see Coddles, but I know where he was all right.

"I don't want him!" roars Coddles.

"I thought that was what we come for!" says I. "Don't pick on me—pick on the croc."

"You ding-danged fool, shut up and throw a rope!" bellows Coddles. "I'm in the mud to my midships and stuck; and the Filipinos are up in the trees with the monkeys."

"Who's making all the fuss?" I asks.

"That ding-danged croc!" says Coddles. "He's tearing this swamp to pieces trying to git rid of the hook so he can swallow me."

"That's what comes of him having instinks," says I, and then I hears a crash that tells me the croc has smashed the boat with his tail.

"Hurry!" yells Coddles. "He ain't ten feet away, and if he gits himself untangled from that rope, I'm a goner. He gits meaner every minute! Hark at him!"

I tried an iron belaying-pin to a heaving-line and threw it into the bushes, aiming at the place from where was coming the most mud and bad language.

"Wow!" yells Coddles. "You 'most bashed me head in with that pin! But I'm fast to it. Heave away!"

The crew tailed on the line and we hauled. Coddles come hard. We could hear the mud suck as we started him.

"There goes my shoes!" yells Coddles.

We kept hauling. Something had to give, and it happened to be the skipper. He come out head first with a strangle-hold on the belaying-pin.

Mud! He was nothing but! He just spouted mud like a whale. And mad! I never saw a madder man. His remarks as we drug him over the side ain't fit to repeat.

The two Filipinos got into our masts from the trees, and while the cook was taking the mud out of the skipper's eyes with a chicken-feather, I got up the anchor and dropped down-river a ways. I thought Coddles would feel better and be softer-spoken if he couldn't hear that croc tearing things up in the swamp.

NOT long after that I heard an awful rumbling, like a thunderstorm was coming up. There was a lot of black clouds over the top of the mountain—but it was smoke!

"What's that noise?" yells Coddles from the main cabin. "Is that the croc fighting?"

"No, it's the mountain rumbling," says I. "That croc has jarred the island, looks to me."

Coddles runs out on deck, with a towel around him. "You're gone plumb crazy," says he, and squints with his good eye at the mountain.

The rumbling gits worse, and Coddles looks at me, and I sees he's scared under the mud that's still on his face.

"Great guns!" says he. "I guess you're right—the volcano is acting up."

With that, the volcano begins to spit fire and ashes.

"We've got to git out of the river and clear of here," says Coddles, and we ups with the anchor and goes down the river.

All this time Coddles was pale, and his hands shook, because it sure looked bad. We got a draft of air that took us off the island and we scooted.

We hadn't gone far before there was a terrible roar, and a lot of explosions. The mountain just shook and kept blowing great chunks of itself into the air—fire, smoke and ashes. The whole sky was full of smoke, and the ashes begins to come down on our decks. Then the mountain blew its head off with a racket that fair took our breath away. I'll bet it was heard to Australia!

The horizon behind us was just black smoke. Then there come a big wave that lifted us fifteen feet—a tidal wave. And we sure thought we were all gone but the insurance.

When we come down, we looked back.

"The ding-danged thing has blown up and sunk!" says Coddles to me. "Stand by to go about, and we'll see what's left."

We sailed back. The smoke cleared away—and not a speck on the horizon where our island ought to be!

"Gone!" says Coddles. "Just as I said. It ought to be right here where we are now."

"That's the last of my ten dollars," says I. "What's them white spots ahead?"

Coddles squinted with his good eye. There was a good many parrots' feathers in the air and he couldn't see very well. All of a sudden he lets out a yell.

"Faggin!" says he. "We're rich!"

"So I notice," says I. "Rich in experience, and out ten dollars worth of island."

"Them white spots!" goes on Coddles. "You know what they be? Crocodiles, that's what! Crocodiles floating around belly-up!"

And he was right! In among a lot of green vines and leaves and parrot feathers, there were acres of dead crocs floating around, deader'n Noah. And all we had to do was to pick 'em up and skin 'em!

For the next two days we lay to, and all we done was to haul crocs aboard with a tackle. When we had our holds full of skins, we filled away for Manila, Coddles tickled pink with the way things had turned out.

THE next morning we saw a *vinta* lifting along to cross our bows. When she was close enough, we saw that the Dato Dammang was on board, mad as a wet hen, and jumping up and down and swearing in the Arab language.

"What's eating you?" yells Coddles to

him, and out of the side of his mouth he says to me, "The old pirate has most likely found out that his Confederate money won't buy trade gin."

"Money no good!" yells the dato, doing a shirt-dance on the deck of his *vinta*. He had on a red *sarong*, and a turban he'd made out of a pair of blue velvet curtains he'd stolen out of some passenger steamer.

"Neither was your ding-danged island!" says Coddles. "You can have it back. There ain't even any of the bang left to its name. I got cheated."

"But you hab got *mugger* skins from my island," yells the dato. "My fishing mens see you yesterday take 'em all. I want my skins!"

"Yours, you son of perdition!" yells Coddles. "Yours, nothin'! I picked these crocs up on the blooming high seas. And I'll keep 'em. You're a fraud, that's what you are, gittin' my money under false pretenses.

"If you don't shut up I'll sue you for putting my life in danger with your ding-danged volcano! Also, you represented to me that them crocodiles was tame—but I found 'em wild and dangerous. Up with the helm, Mr. Faggin!"

With that, we stood away from the *vinta*, carrying our skins, and leaving the dato jumping up and down on his deck and swearing something dreadful.

And the crocodile skins sold for nine thousand and twenty-two dollars and forty-eight cents, American money.

Not of their Blood

By E. E Harriman

Author of "The Judgment of the Desert," "Reyes of Altar," etc.

BOB COBURN had steered a ten-horse freight team over Arizona's dry plains and little hills with a jerkline these many years. Bob was as well known as the potent powers of Hassayampa water. Perched high on the front end of a huge wagon, broad of tire and capacious of body, with two trailers rumbling along behind, he whistled and sang his way through desert reaches.

For years he rode alone, even in those days when a man lived by being good with rifle and six-gun. Jolly, good-tempered Bob Coburn could be highly dangerous if occasion demanded. Many a dirty, louse-infested "Noble Redman" had learned that just too late. Some few semi-white hold-up men shared the knowledge.

Bob no longer rode alone, for Jimmy was "dang nigh growed." Indeed, Jimmy was a full inch taller than Bob right now, though it would take several more years to fill him out properly.

Jimmy called Bob dad, and Bob accepted the title with delight. Yet Bob Coburn never had a son born to him. Girls a-plenty, but nary a boy. Jimmy did not know it until recently, just after his sixteenth birthday. He had supposed himself a full brother to those girls and a real son to Bob and Mary. So did the girls—yet.

"*Not of Their Blood*," *copyright*, 1921, *by E. E. Harriman.*

It was Buck Raban who enlightened Jimmy. Buck had come into the story—and that part of Arizona—rather abruptly. He posed as a bad-man and hoped that other men would so consider him. He bullied where he dared, after carefully sizing up his man. It was unfortunate for Buck that he had no rules for sizing up the jolly, decent freighter.

He had picked himself up after getting kicked out of Cassiday's store, to see Bob's old forty-five looking at his solar plexus.

"Go ahead! Grab your gun, you coyote!" said Bob, returning his to its holster, but keeping his hand hovering near. "I'll give ye even break. I'll do better. Here. I'll drop my hand an' let ye draw first. Hop to it, you foul-mouthed devil. An' I'm bettin' you never heave such talk around promiscuous again, when a woman is nigh."

But Buck Raban did not go for his gun. He slunk off, while old Mrs. Carey thanked Bob for his quick action.

"Much obleeged, Bob. I'm old an' dried up, but filth ain't no more pleasant to me now than it was forty year ago. You sarved 'im just right an' thankee fer it," she said.

" 'S all right, Ma Carey. Might-'a'-been one o' my girls jest as easy. I'd kick a feller fer such talk afore a Hualpai squaw," said Bob and the old lady got his meaning straight.

Next day Buck Raban met Jimmy in the blacksmith shop, where Bert, the smith, was shoeing Bob's lead team for Jimmy. It seemed that Buck had been in the village long ago, when Jimmy was a baby. He knew the truth that Bob and Mary had never mentioned and that the real men and women of the place had kept secret out of respect to them.

Buck opened up with a sneering, disparaging remark about Bob. Like a flash Jimmy resented it.

"You keep your tongue off my dad. He's a better man than you."

"——! He ain't yer dad. You're nothin' but a —— maverick he done picked up," said Buck. "You ain't nothin' but a lunger's kid, Bob an' Mary 'dopted when yer mother cashed in."

Smash! Even a sixteen-year-old can hit hard, when he is given a chance to swing it on the mark and is in right condition. Buck reeled.

"You —— lil' skunk!" he bellowed, clapping a hand to his mouth. "I'll batter the life out'n ye fer that!"

He jerked his bloody hand away from his mouth and leaped at Jim. Bert Rodgers caught him midway and slammed him against a wall. With nimble fingers he acquired Buck's gun and poked him in the ribs.

"Not any, Buck Raban! You don't beat up no sixteen-year-old kid in my shop. Jimmy give it ye just right, same as Bob did. Go over an' set down in my old chair. *Pronto*, now, an' don't chirp."

Buck went and settled himself in the grimy old chair beside a board desk that hung from the wall timbers.

"I didn't tell nothin' but the truth," he mumbled.

"Yeh, but ye told it just to worry Bob, cause ye hate 'im. Easy! Easy there, Jim. Don't hit 'im agin. I'm tryin' to keep you two from mixin' an' I don't want neither of ye to start anythin'."

"Let me at him, Bert," begged Jimmy, red about the eyes and white everywhere else. "If he can lick me I won't squeal; but he can't."

"Jimmy Coburn, you shut up an' get busy pullin' the shoes off the mare. I'll be through with the gelding in ten minutes. Buck, I'll do that little job o' your'n between hosses. 'Twon't take five minutes. Just a plain weld. Come over and stick the irons in the fire. There's yer gun on the anvil. Might as well pick it up now."

So Bert kept the two apart and got Buck out of the shop quickly. It mattered not at all to him that Buck scowled in ugly fashion and seemed sadly peeved over having been disarmed and handled roughly in the bargain. It took more than Buck Raban to scare Bert.

Jimmy did some hard thinking while waiting for the last horse to be shod. When Bert had finished and was wiring up a set of shoes for each horse, Jimmy began to talk to him.

"So I'm not a real son. How did father and mother happen to get me, Bert? You may as well tell me," he said.

"Jimmy, I ain't a-goin' to tell ye nothin'. Go home an' ask Mary. She is the truthfullest woman I ever see, though she can keep still in four languages. Tell her what Buck said an' ask her fer the rest of the story. It's her right to do the tellin', boy."

"I'll do it," said Jimmy.

"All right," said Bert. "Here's a set of shoes fer each hoss, an' they'll fit, in case ye have to nail 'em on. Tell Bob I got a kegful o' the kind he uses on tother hosses, all ready fer 'im."

Jimmy hung the shoes on the saddle the gelding carried and hit the road for home. He cornered Mary, where the girls could not hear, and told her just what Buck had said, plus the virtual admission of its truth, by Bert Rodgers. He looked her squarely in the eye.

"Is it true?" he demanded.

"Yes, Jimmy. It is," she replied.

"Then tell me the whole story. I have a right to know."

"Very well, Jimmy. I had hoped that you would never know, but now you have heard a part it is only right that you should hear it all."

Then she told him of the "lunger" father who left his desk in the East a little too late. Of the mother who concealed her own infirmity, lest she add to the father's suffering. Of how the mother had failed and followed the father within a month, looking imploringly into Mary's face. Of how, just before the end, she, Mary, had understood the mute appeal and had taken the babe in her arms, promising that he should be as an own son to her. Of the joy that flamed in those watching eyes, even as the young mother died.

"You have kept your word, mother, but I can't help wishing I had your blood and dad's in my veins."

"That is perfectly natural, Jimmy, but your father and mother were fine people and from fine stock. You have nothing to be ashamed of on the score of blood and we love you exactly as though you had been born our son. Just forget Buck and his blabbing and all that goes with it. You are our son legally and morally."

Jimmy dropped the subject, though he kept on thinking. He felt that his new status put him under a greater obligation to Bob and Mary than any genuine relationship could. They had picked up a lone maverick and given him every right and privilege.

JIMMY was sensible and he was husky. He had learned a great deal that even the average Arizonian never knows, things the tenderfoot considers almost miraculous. Being with Bob so much had taught him all phases of desert freighting. He had been schooled in the use of guns from his eighth birthday. Pakoon George, Hualpai trailer, had taught him to read sign and follow a blind trail.

"That there boy o' Bob Coburn's is a real one, —— if he ain't," was the verdict of one. "He kin read a trail like a Apache an' sticks like a bur in wool on a bronc. An' shoot! Wiped my eye fer me an' I ain't no slouch, neither, I kin tell ye."

An excellent shot, fine rider and splendid trailer, Jimmy was one boy who was respected by the old-timers.

Jimmy did not see Buck Raban again for three days. Then he had occasion to go to Bert's with a broken brace-rod to be welded. Buck came in while he was heating the iron.

Buck had been thinking about his affair in the shop and he had concluded to carry it further. If Jimmy could be provoked into taking another swing at him, Buck would batter him with his six-gun. He felt sure that he could stand Bert off at the same time.

"Well, Maverick, ye found I tol' the truth, didn't ye?" he sneered.

"Yes, but that doesn't change your part in it a particle," said Jimmy. "You only did it because you are a sneaking coward and wanted to stir up something for dad that would bother him."

Beyond a gray horse Bert lowered a hoof and stood up, his light nailing-hammer in his hand. He squinted across the animal at Buck.

"You're a —— liar," said Buck, his right hand near his gun.

Spat! Jimmy had struck too swiftly for Buck to dodge. With an oath of rage and pain, the bully flipped his gun out and up. He held it for striking, rather than shooting. He moved as fast as his muscles could react to nerve impulse, but not quick enough.

The gun had just reached the top of its sweep and was ready, indeed had moved the first inch, for a down blow on Jimmy's head. A hammer of light weight whizzed and its head clipped Buck on the side of his nose. A red-hot steel rod whirled out of the fire and up under that lifted hand. It singed the skin a trifle and the hand went higher.

"Keep it up!" snapped Jimmy, turning the hot steel to aim at the face of the bully. "Take it by the muzzle with your

left hand and give me that gun. Quick or I'll brand you."

The gun swung, butt first, into Jimmy's left hand. He broke it and threw the shells across the shop. Placing it on the anvil, Jimmy gave Buck his orders. Bert came from beyond the horse to help.

"Take that sledge and beat that gun flat. Go to it, you snake."

The sledge weighed sixteen pounds. As often as the gun hopped off the anvil Bert picked it up and replaced it. When the barrel and cylinder were cracked and flattened, the lock wrecked completely and the butt in fine splinters, Jimmy told Buck to go. He had kept changing rods, always presenting one that glowed redly.

"Now git and don't start anything again with me or I may mark you up right. I may be only a boy, but I'm not afraid of Buck Raban."

"By the whale that swallered Jonah!" chortled Bert, watching Buck ride off with an empty holster. "Best I ever see. Wallopin' nine kinds o' —— out'n his own gun with a sledge, while you helt a hot iron clost to the back of his neck. I gotta tell that."

That afternoon the battered gun hung on a nail in the village post-office, with a full account of the incident written on foolscap paper tacked up below. Bert had signed the story with a flourish.

"Doggone, I wish Bert hadn't hung that there," thought Jimmy. "I reckon I'll get out of town till the folks quit talking."

Bob saw the gun and writing and came home chuckling over it. He told the story at the supper table, but lost his hilarity when he saw how it bothered Jimmy and troubled his mother.

"Oh, shucks, Mary! The boy had to do it. Don't pull a long face over it. Just look at the girls. They are as tickled over it as I am. It ain't like he was quarrelsome."

"I know. I am not criticizing Jimmy. It is only that I don't want him getting mixed up in such a way."

"Forget it. Jim, I took a job today. Easy Pickings Company. A lot of grub, machinery, tools, blankets, clothing and so on. A haul of a hundred-and-forty-eight miles out, with three dry camps on the way.

"Have enough junk to load the big wagon and both trailers four times over. Want us to start the first load out next Monday morning. I figured the haul at twenty miles a day, loaded, and thirty coming in empty. They may want to ship some high grade in, so that will be extra. They agreed to a good stiff price.

"Jim, make a bundle of harness extras, traces, straps and such. I don't want to get stuck forty miles from anywhere, just for lack of a dinky little piece of leather. Mary, we will need grub for two weeks, for each trip. Of course, in case of an emergency we can use some of that we are hauling, but I prefer to carry my own."

They set barrels in the wagons for their water supply and filled them from their reservoir. This sat high on a hillside and was filled by a windmill. Pipes led to the house and corral.

They packed sacks of grain and bales of hay for the ten horses. Then they took the wagon and trailers down to the warehouse and had the loads packed neatly.

The cargo was valuable and the road was a lonely one. Across a wide plain known as one of Arizona's dryest, through a lot of little hills and into a distant range of barren mountains. Yet Bob's old forty-five was the only weapon carried.

Bob roused Mary and Jimmy at the first streak of light Monday morning. They pulled out just as the rising sun sent its first red lances shooting up across the eastern sky. Jimmy sat on the rear trailer, waving his hand to Mary and the girls, while Bob, his old gun under his left thigh, with the butt sticking out handily, held the sash-cord jerkline in one hand and waved his hat with the other.

MESQUITE, catclaw, greasewood and cactus. Giant saguaros, Mormon tea, green-barked *sangre de Christo* bushes and more cactus. That was all the vegetation they found on their journey, save a few young cottonwoods below a spring. Sand, gravel and an occasional stretch of natural cement, stuck full of pebbles, made their roads.

The bulk of the roads were good and the wagons rolled easily, except on the up grades. At night they camped with the wagons left on a little downward slope, brakes on and wheels blocked. It would be less work for the horses to start the loads in the morning.

Bob looked out for his animals religiously. He knew perfectly that to get the best

service from horse or mule, one must treat it well. Every horse of the ten was a friend of the family.

"Going good, Jim. We'll make Borrego Spring by five o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Got to get out from there at daylight to make Venado Spring that evening. It is a long haul between those two."

"Sure is," said Jim. "Dry camp after Venado; then Cigarrón Well* and another dry camp, eh? What kind of a water supply has the E. P. M. C. at their camp? Good or just fair?"

"Very good. They built a dam in a cañon and caught flood water enough to make a lake about a mile long. Just a narrow one, but with enough to supply the mill and camp easily."

They made camp at Borrego Spring the second night out, having stretched the twenty mile days into nearly thirty apiece. All seemed serene and comfortable to them and they believed this would be an eventless trip. That was what they craved most of all.

If things happen on a freighting trip, they are almost always of a trivial nature. A trace may break, a portion of what a sailor calls the "deck-load" might slip, a horse may try to roll and land with his back down hill, waiting for his driver to grip a leg and roll him on over. A freighter does not anticipate serious trouble.

But when something big does strike his outfit wrong, he is in a pickle. Far from any human aid, in charge of a load worth thousands, a crippled team or a crippled wagon anchoring him, he is in bad case. So Bob Coburn invariably tried to forestall accidents by extreme care before starting, as well as along the way.

Bob slept with his big gun between his legs, its butt ready to his hand at any instant. His one blanket hid his arms and gun, so he could get the baby cannon into action unseen.

Once in the night he roused, thinking he had heard an unusual and threatening sound. He sat up, bringing his gun out from beneath the blanket while rising. He listened and heard nothing more save the low sough of the night wind and the ordinary night stir of resting horses. He lay down once more and was soon asleep.

Daylight was chasing the shadows away when he again wakened. Jim was standing up, stretching and yawning. Bob slipped out of his own bed and hailed Jimmy cheerfully.

"Grain only, this morning, Jimmy. We light out the minute that is eaten and we can hitch up. Get a fresh sack from the rear trailer."

Jimmy hurried to the trailer and mounted a hub. He stopped as his fingers touched the tarp covering it and he called out sharply.

"This way, dad, right pronto, please. This load has been tampered with since last night. Somebody has been after our stuff."

Bob hurried over to see for himself. One glance told the story. Human hands had tumbled the carefully stored merchandise about in a search for something not readily found there.

"Either of the other loads show up like this?" asked Jimmy.

"I didn't look," said Bob. "The tarp on the back of the next trailer looks smooth. I'll go see how they look up there."

Lifting the canvas cover here and there, Bob circled first one wagon and then the other. In each there was evidence of crooked work. Hastily he and Jimmy totted up what they could see was missing.

"Blankets, a few cans of tomatoes and corned beef, possibly a few other items of grub. That's all. Don't amount to much. Hold on! Where on earth are our canteens?" Jimmy said to Bob.

"Snagged them both, just as sure as shooting," said Bob, after a slow look at the place where they had hung last night. "And by the same token, Jim, what has become of Fan and Billy?"

They looked along the line of restless horses, stepping about and whickering for the grain they knew was coming. The trained leaders had disappeared completely. Consternation rendered Jimmy dumb for the moment. No other team of the lot had been trained to jerkline guiding. Without the pair that understood, the whole outfit was balked, stranded, anchored indefinitely.

Bob turned a troubled face toward Jimmy, then dropped from the wheel he had mounted and walked swiftly over to where the leaders had stood at dark last night. Jimmy followed and they read the signs together. They looked into each other's eyes and Bob spoke.

* Borrego is Spanish for lamb; Venado is deer; Cigarrón is grasshopper.

"Jim, we're stuck and stuck badly. I hardly know what to do."

CHAPTER II

JIMMY looked at Bob with troubled eyes. He well knew how serious the situation was. It would not do to leave any part of the load by the wayside. The Indians had not yet learned the sacred property rights of their white neighbors. *Meum* and *tuum* meant nothing in their code, when a hungry stomach called for food or a naked back for the comfort of a blanket. Anything that pleased their fancy would tilt their honesty bottom upward instantly.

The company expected their goods delivered promptly and would be impatient of delay from any cause whatever. Bob had enjoyed a good reputation for prompt delivery and safe handling of goods. Unless he made good now he would suffer more or less in the future through his failure. Jimmy turned away without speaking.

Stooping to examine every mark upon the ground, Jimmy circled the wagon and trailers, scouted back and forth where the missing team had been tethered, followed the trail they had made in leaving. He came trotting back to Bob with his eyes eagerly alight.

"Dad, those fellows can't be many hours ahead. I could overtake them before dark, I believe," he said. "I am going after Fan and Billy."

"Wait a bit, Jimmy. How in thunder will you carry water? Both of our canteens are gone and we haven't anything else to use. That trail leads southeast and the nearest spring or waterhole in that direction is the old Chico well and that is forty miles away.

"Besides, it is always full of dead things, rattlers, rabbits and the like. You can't walk half a day without water and keep sane. How do you expect to trail these ladrones till night and not carry any?"

"I forgot the canteens were stolen," Jimmy answered, frowning.

"Well, they are; and I would like to know how you propose to get the horses away from the thieves. Going to walk up and say 'please' to 'em? Think they'd hand them right over, cheerful?"

"Shucks, dad, I wouldn't ask them anything. I'd just lay low and steal them back again, while the fellows are asleep."

"That's all right if you say it quick, but that type of Arizona men sleeps mighty light. He most generally packs a nimble gun, too. I guess you don't trail this gang, Jimmy. For two reasons, no canteen and the chance of getting punctured by a forty-five slug."

"Don't forbid my going, dad. I may think up some way to carry the water and I know I can sneak up on them and get the team away."

"You produce a substitute for a canteen and then we'll talk the matter over about the other. Until then it is a waste of language to discuss it. You simply can not go without water."

Jimmy's face clouded and he turned aside thoughtfully, looking out across the gentle slope. Something was moving through the scanty cover and he watched it idly. It pushed past a greasewood bush and came on toward the spring. It was about sixty yards distant.

Suddenly Jimmy's face lighted up with a new thought. He held his hand out to Bob, the fingers half bent to grasp something.

"Your gun, and don't move a muscle!" he whispered.

Wonderingly, but without reply, Bob drew the Colt and shoved the butt into those tensed fingers. They closed on it and swung the gun up and over Bob's left shoulder. The roar of the heavy discharge shattered the morning stillness. The horses jerked, stared and went on with their eating. Jim handed the gun back to Bob.

"I've captured my canteen," he said. "Now will you let me go?"

Bob turned on his heel and looked. An old desert burro, gray and ragged of coat, lay dead on the hillside.

"Canteen? What on earth do you mean, Jimmy?"

"I'll show you," said Jim, starting for the jack on a run.

Only a few minutes and he was back, carrying in his hands the stomach of the dead burro. Without a word, he got an enameled iron cup from the wagon, fished some strong string from the box where the tools were carried and ran to the spring.

Working fast and surely, he filled the stomach half full of water, then pounded, squeezed and kneaded it. Letting the water run off, he repeated this operation

half a dozen times. The last time the water came away clear and clean. The receptacle had been well cleansed.

With a strong string he tied the lower pipe, then carried the bag to the water barrel from which he and Bob drew their own rations and filled it from the spigot. A second string made the improvised canteen tight. A strap and part of a gunny sack completed it.

"Look, dad! Tight and safe. Hung in a sack hammock and slung with a strap. It carries half as much again as a canteen and it is clean. Now I can follow those rascals and run off with Fan and Billy."

"Well, I don't know, Jimmy, as I ought to let you try, but I don't see what else to do. Take my gun with you, anyhow."

"No, dad. If I go unarmed I'll know I can't fight it out with them and will depend upon my wit. If I have the gun I might be tempted to tackle them roughly and smoke them up. I am not going to let them see me, so I won't get shot. I wish I knew how far ahead they are traveling. By the signs I should judge about three hours."

"I reckon you're about right. I was roused by something and sat up with my gun ready, at about two-thirty. I didn't hear anything and lay down again. Probably they were overhauling our stuff in search for food and made a little noise. Then they kept still to see if it disturbed us and when I dropped off to sleep made a getaway.

"It is now five minutes past five. You reckon your guess is good. How fast can you follow that trail?"

"Fast enough to come up with them by dark or before. I want a bit of grub and one blanket. Let's hurry a little. I can eat a bite while I walk, for breakfast. I want to start in fifteen minutes."

He missed it by five, but he was off in twenty minutes in good order. He had rations for two days rolled in his blanket and hung on his back. He carried the contents of a small can of beef in one hand and a chunk of Mary Coburn's bread in the other. He took alternate bites from each, while walking rapidly.

BOB watched him as he followed the trail with certainty across the little valley toward the southeast. He was troubled lest Jimmy should run into serious difficulty, yet he had so much faith in the boy's ability as a trailer and bushwhacker, that he hoped for results.

"He's got too much sense to blunder into danger. If I went along I'd be sure to do something that would put the outlaws wise to us. Besides that, we might come back to find all the other horses gone. I must stay, but I wish I could be with Jimmy."

So Bob thought as Jimmy went out of sight over a ridge. He was right, beyond a doubt. It would be mighty hard to sit around and wait for the boy. He got out his jack and grease and started in to lubricate every wheel. After that he went over each harness to see that they were all right. Horse-thieves might use knives.

The harnesses were all right, but a good part of the jerkline was gone. It had been cut and carried off. Bob understood why. The horses had worn halters with short ropes. The thieves intended to stake them out if they found any forage plants, which was likely to happen.

Bob puttered around about this and that as long as he could. He curried and brushed every horse three times over, trying to keep his hands and mind occupied. The day passed slowly.

While Bob Coburn sought occupation to keep from too much thinking, Jimmy was trailing men who took advantage of each and every natural condition that would blind a trail. They rode on bare rock in places. They picked a long strip of cement formation and followed that a mile. Once they traveled up a draw that was just a jumble of rocks.

In some places their efforts caused Jimmy to slow down. In others he guessed the place where the trail would again be visible and made substantial gains by striking across the chord of an arc.

Here he would come to a bare rock where all he had to guide him was an occasional powdering of a thin bit of rock under a hoof or a shiny glint where a steel shoe had slipped a trifle.

Once he found a thin bit of paper, a cigaret paper, sticking in a bush. It had not sunburned in the slightest, sure proof that it had blown there today. Two hundred yards farther on he found a cigaret stub, picked it up, pinched it, smelled it and cast it aside.

"Fresh. Hasn't been there many hours," he thought, confidently.

A tiny bit of stone, turned on edge by a

hoof and showing different coloring than the surrounding stones. A crushed bit of buckthorn cactus that showed a one-inch print of a horseshoe. A scattered dozen or more of balls from a cholla cactus, sure proof of a jarring touch. A burned match that still smelled of the fire.

All these and many more little matters that would seem trivial to the ordinary mortal, told Jimmy he was still on the trail.

Often the mark of a hoof would not show plainly once in a mile. In one place he followed faint, almost indistinguishable signs for a mile and a half, then satisfied himself that he was right by finding one horsehair from a light colored tail, caught on a catclaw thorn.

"That's out of Billy's tail," he muttered. "I'd swear to it."

Billy was a paint pony, a pinto, and his tail was a yellowish gray color. Fan had a black tail and her body color was sorrel.

They were the smallest pair in the outfit, weighing about nine hundred apiece, while the rest averaged close to twelve hundred pounds. The wheelers, Buck and Mike, hugged the fourteen hundred mark.

"There's a bunch of *galletta* grass freshly cropped. And there's a place where a horse stumbled. Fan does that every time she tries to grab a bite along the road. And there's another cigaret stub. Still damp and stinking. I'm getting mighty close," Jimmy thought at five o'clock. Half an hour later he sighted the riders.

They were about two miles ahead, just coming up out of an arroyo. Jimmy sank down behind a bush and watched. When they had passed from view, he arose and started on a jog-trot. He had trotted many a mile where the trail was plain. Now it was plain, a good part of the time anyhow. The thieves seemed to think their many efforts to lay a blind trail would surely forestall any attempt at pursuit.

At dark that evening, Jimmy lay on the ground about a hundred yards from the thieves and watched their little camp-fire. They had built it among rocks where it was shielded from all sides save the south. Jimmy had circled and come up from beyond the camp.

The men had ridden all day on folded blankets and guided the horses by halters. With parts of the jerkline, they had fashioned improvised stirrups to make it easier for themselves. Dividing the cord, they had looped the pieces across the horses, to hold their feet. But in spite of blankets and cord stirrups, it had been a hard ride. They had stopped for the night, sore and weary.

Jimmy could hear their voices, but not their words. He meditated creeping closer, but relinquished the idea because of the danger.

He knew they quarreled twice while he listened, for angry tones carry, if words do not. He knew that they had found Chico well water disgusting, for they both swore loudly enough to let him distinguish their words, when they dipped into it.

The night deepened and the little fire died down. An occasional spark rose and drifted on the night breeze. The snap and flare of a match, answered by another near by, told him just where the outlaws had bedded down. He had spotted Fan and Billy long ago.

Jimmy took his blanket off his back, folded it and cut it with his knife. Folding and cutting, he kept on till he had ten fragments. Two he bound on his own feet, eight he strung on a string and tied to his belt in the back. Then he ventured to reduce the distance a half between himself and the faintly glowing embers.

He moved slowly, crawling on hands and knees. He sank on his breast at fifty yards distance and waited an hour and thought they must surely be soundly sleeping in the camp.

Shifting his position warily, he put a knee on a tiny twig. The answering snap of the sun-dried morsel sounded loudly in his ears. A quick relaxation of muscles let him down flat on his stomach.

Not a second too soon had he dropped. The crash of a heavy gun woke the echoes. A catclaw branch, six inches above his head, drooped suddenly, half severed by a bullet. A second buried itself under his right forearm. He hugged the sand in silence, motionless.

The drooping branch, thickly covered with short-stemmed leaves, rested on his head and shoulders, screening him from the camp.

Came the stir of men slipping out of their blankets, ready for war or flight. Fan and Billy fluttered inquiring nostrils.

A startled ground owl flapped soft wings in a hurried flight and some tiny ember

flared into a brief blaze, like a fairy candle. Jimmy held his head low and never twitched a muscle.

CHAPTER III

FOR a full five minutes after the shots and the hasty scramble of the horse-thieves to cover, there was absolute silence. Then some young coyote, not yet in full voice, yapped from a ridge six hundred yards to the west. A voice rose from the region of the camp in a torrent of abusive language. A form stalked out of the brush.

"You beat anythin' in human form I ever tuck up with, Buck," it said. "Can't hear nothin' without havin' a fit. A kiote steps on a li'l' twig an' you scatter lead all over the country. Publish our present location to any son of a gun that's listenin' within a mile. When we git in the hills I s'pose you'll shoot every time a packrat rustles a bush er runs acrost camp.

"If I ever git shet of ye this time, it'll be a long while afore I ever take up with ye ag'in. Jest 'cause a pup kiote goes rustlin' fer scraps an' steps on somethin' that snaps, you jest starts raisin' the county. Haven't any more nerve than a scary woman."

For ten minutes the brutish man abused his companion, without eliciting a word in reply. Both men stood in plain view from where Jimmy lay, as they again spread their blankets smoothly for use.

For several minutes after they had again curled up to sleep, the speaker threw short, insulting sentences at his companion. Then the sound of snores told that he slept. A little later the other gave evidence that he, too, had become oblivious to everything.

For a full hour Jimmy kept his position, his cheek on one arm and his eyes peering ahead in the dim starlight. Then he began to move the half severed catclaw branch aside carefully.

At daylight the robbers wakened, sat up and looked carefully all about. They knew better than to jump up at once and expose themselves to possible watchers. But presently the search for spying enemies brought the gaze of the man Buck to the bush where they had hung the canteens. It stood within twenty feet of his bed.

A gasp and startled exclamation made his partner turn quickly with his gun out. Buck, our old friend of the gun-smashing espisode, pointed at the bush. Its branches were bare of any suggestion of a canteen. The second man swore vilely, rising to his feet.

"And the horses!" said Buck, excitedly springing up. "Where are they? They are gone, too. We've been stole bare."

For once the brutish swearer of strange oaths was silent. The magnitude of the danger that had struck them choked them.

The two outlaws stared here and there fruitlessly, then turned to gaze at each other. They knew there was no other waterhole less than forty miles from their camp, save the one where Bob Coburn lay. They dared not go back there. They could not carry water to go on. They could only stay where they were until food gave out and then die. Or else start out walking, grow delirious and die.

"Hank, we're done," said Buck, in trembling tones. "That was Bob's work, his an' that boy of his'n. They've follered us. His boy is the boss trailer of the county, bar none. They've left us stranded, with sure death starin' us in the face. Why didn't they shoot us in our sleep, instead? They ain't human, them two."

"Shut up!" snarled the man Hank. "You ain't got no kick comin'. Try an' think a way out'n this jam we're in, instid of roarin' like a calf. I reckon you did hear somethin' last night when ye scattered lead up yon way. Lemme think."

As Hank thought, he paced slowly back and forth between the ashes of last night's fire and his bed. Suddenly he stopped, staring down at the ground. He stooped and pulled a mesquite thorn from the sand. On it was impaled a small sheet of paper torn from a note-book.

"Look-a-here, Buck," he said, after a moment of reading, handing the paper on. "That cub of Coburn's thinks he's got us corralled."

"Well, hain't he?" said Buck, taking the paper. "Looks like it."

He held the paper in trembling fingers and read the penciled writing on it, set without regard to lines. It had been written in the dark.

"If you thieves don't feel like hiking forty miles to decent water and more grub, perhaps you had better surrender. I know you can't pack any of the water from here. Go north to the dead mesquite and hang up your guns. Then turn northwest to the shale cliff with gypsum streaks in it. I'll wait there till seven o'clock."

Buck lowered the scrap of paper and gazed dizzily across at his partner. He was visualizing the penitentiary at Florence and it did not appeal to him as a residence.

"I gotta scheme, Buck," said Hank. "We'll hang our guns like he says an' start fer the cliff. We keep on a-goin' till we git there, too. He sees our belts is gone an' no gun in sight. That's all jest as he plans it, but they's a joker hid."

"A lot o' good a joker'll do ye agin that kid an' his dad."

"Shut up! I ain't through yit. You got a sweet li'l' automatic under yer left arm I know. Saw ye buy it an' stow it there, four days ago. That li'l' Black Annie gun is the joker.

"I'll walk ahead jest a little bit, meetin' up with them two. I stumbles a bit on a loose stone er somethin' an' swings my shoulders when we git within three-four yards, easy shootin' distance. Then you go fer Black Annie an' shoot over my shoulder. Move like ye run on ball-bearin's an' was pushed by blue lightnin'. Plug 'em both an' plug 'em fer keeps. Jump yer gun from one to tother an' let 'em have about four slugs apiece to make sure."

Buck brightened up perceptibly. He would be shooting from back of Hank's burly body. It would protect him to a certain extent and he knew the automatic would spit bullets fast.

"It's a go," he said. "Let's git a move on us."

"Roll yer blanket first," ordered Hank. "We'll want 'em after we've salivated them two an' I'm aimin' to change my direction to farther west. I'll make them hosses pack us inta camp at Gato Spring afore we quit ridin' today, if it kills 'em. They's good water there, an' Bill, my brother, has a ranch only fourteen mile beyond."

"It's more'n sixty mile to Gato Spring, Hank," protested Buck in plaintive tones. "Ridin' on a blanket sixty miles ain't no fun."

"Softy! Bill can git us acrost the line in his flivver afore sun-up tomorrow, where we're safe. Wer're ridin' that way."

They rolled their blankets and started out. The dead mesquite stood on a ridge half a mile north. It was about as far from there to the shale cliff. The mesquite stood in a dense growth of cholla and was hard to approach without getting covered with the loosely growing balls. Beyond the tree the bank dropped at a steep angle to the wash thirty feet lower down.

They hung their belts on the mesquite and worked along to the bank. There they crept down to the lower level and started on.

THE ridge where they left their guns lay in a shape like the hind leg of a dog. The dead tree stood near the ankle. The shale cliff constituted the dog's ham. The shortest way for men on foot was to cut across the angle in an almost direct line.

However, the way was rough, with loose stones under foot. They could not travel fast anywhere. When they reached the second half of the journey, they found their path even rougher.

They were within about four hundred yards of the cliff when they saw a man on horseback ride past the hither end of the striped wall and dismount. Hank paused and Buck bumped into him.

"Only one feller an' he waited, hid, to c'lect our guns. Well, it saves our havin' to go back after 'em. Don't fergit to move right lively' when ye go after Black Annie an' don't make no bobble of it. Ye gotta git 'im an' git 'im good er yer name's mud."

"I ain't likely to slip up on this deal," Buck replied. "I owe that feller somethin' an' now's when I pay, if it's Jim Coburn."

"Don't git the notion he's easy, that's all," said Hank, starting along. "Any feller that can trail us over hard goin' like we went over, then sneak inta camp an' steal us bare like he done ain't no short-horn. He's a real long-horn an' onto his job with both feet.

"Then the way he lays down the law to us afterward shows he ain't sufferin' from cold feet ner heart failure, neither. He's got nerve an' he knows he's got us where the hair's short. We gotta do like he orders er kick in, turn up our toes, shuffle off.

"What I'm tryin' to ding inta ye is, watch 'im, move quick, shoot straight an' often. He'll be heeled with both our guns, besides his own, an' I'll bet he can shoot a feller plumb in half afore he can hit the grit with his nose. Ye gotta beat 'im to it."

"What ye tryin' to do, git me scart of 'im? I ain't no more anxious to git free board off'n the State than you be an' I'm out to pay a grudge debt, too. 'Tain't

likely I'm goin' to sleep with my gun half out. I'll git 'im all right, if he don't jam a cannon in my middle section an' frisk me first thing."

"We ain't a-goin' to come within friskin' range afore we nails that feller. With me in front to cover yer move, ye oughtta git 'im without no trouble at three-four paces. He won't git a hand on ye ner punch no holes in ye with a gun muzzle, neither."

They plodded on over and around the jumbled rocks, often having to change from watching the waiting Jimmy, to watching their footing. When they had come within eighty yards they had to cross a very bad section and did not glance at Jimmy for a full minute. Then he was gone. They could see Fan and Billy waiting by the cliff, but Jimmy had disappeared completely from their view.

"Gittin' under cover early. Foxy feller," said Hank. "Now keep yer eye peeled an' yer hand ready. Smooth an' quick is what does it. Don't pull no false starts an' don't git rattled."

Straight for the two horses they marched, their eyes taking in everything in sight, moving dartingly. They came out of the rocky going while still thirty yards distant. Over fairly smooth ground they walked, between large rocks that walled both sides.

When within a dozen paces of Billy a voice halted them. There was no tremor in the voice and the order to put their hands up came with a snap. Both men reached high and stood motionless.

"Pull your shirts off," came the next order. "Be quick about it. I want to be sure you fellows have not held out a gun on me."

With one hand at their throats, the thieves unbuttoned the gray flannel shirts they wore, then gripped them between their shoulders and pulled. When his head was covered Hank staggered a little and whispered two words, fiercely, imperatively.

"Black Annie!"

He jerked the shirt down till his eyes just cleared it and set a hand to his other wrist to draw the sleeve clear. His stagger had swung his shoulders partly between Buck and the big rock beside which Jimmy stood. Buck, working to clear his face of the shirt, had slipped the black automatic clear.

Unknown to him, he had so displaced the flannel that the end of the flat holster showed plainly. Jimmy's eyes squinted and his hand moved a trifle. Before his finger could squeeze the trigger, Buck had shoved the little gun over Hank's right shoulder and fired two shots. Jimmy slumped quickly down to the left.

"Got 'im!" yelped Hank instantly.

CHAPTER IV

THE crashing roar of a forty-five clipped the last syllable of Hank's utterance. Jimmy had fired while falling.

Curses and groaning grunts replied to the shot. Hank lurched forward and dropped on his face. Buck whirled in a quarter-turn, as his left hand, wrapped in the shirt, went to his right arm.

Jimmy's face, pale and drawn, but indomitable yet, rose from the rocks. His right hand held a gun that was still effectively handled. He looked at the efforts of the fallen robber to regain his feet, using but one hand. His gaze shifted to the other who held his gun arm with his left hand, while it flopped useless below the elbow.

On the ground lay the automatic, but neither robber made any attempt to pick it up. They had had all they cared to carry.

Jimmy walked out into the open, picked up the gun and slid it into his pocket. He moved his left arm gingerly, as though any great action bothered him, keeping it doubled and pressed against him as much as possible. He had already holstered one gun.

"Stand still and let me see how badly you are hurt," he ordered and began making an examination.

His one bullet had torn through the ribs, wrecking the pectoral muscle and coming out through the bony structure at the back and nicking the right shoulder-blade. So much for Hank.

The flattened lead had struck Buck's elbow, ruining the joint. Neither man had any fight left in him. They were whipped, rendered helpless, in grave danger of bleeding to death, all by one bullet.

'I reckon you aren't dangerous now," said Jimmy, holstering the second revolver. "I'll do what I can for you."

He bandaged both men's wounds as well as he could, tearing up their shirts to do it. He brought Billy and led him up beside a sloping rock, where the pair could manage to mount. Then he took the two parts

of the jerkline and tied their feet under Billy's stomach. With Billy's halter rope he lashed their bodies together, with the knot in the middle of Hank's back.

Surreptitiously he pressed a rounded stone against the inside of his arm, and, when the prisoners were tied, clumsily applied a rough tourniquet made of a strip of blanket twisted by himself.

Crawling onto Fan from a rock, he slapped Billy and started back-tracking to find Bob and the wagons. He forced the horses to keep at a fast walk and made as direct a line as he could.

As Fan walked a little red line formed on her left side, just in front of Jimmy's leg. The line grew wider and darker as the day passed. As it deepened its color, Jimmy slumped more and more in his seat, but held himself by sheer will-power.

The thirty-two automatic bullet had plowed his arm above the elbow, nicking the artery. The tourniquet was only partially effective and he was losing a great deal of blood.

Neither robber wanted Jimmy to faint and fall off his horse now. Not knowing exactly the nature of his wound, still they hoped he would retain enough strength to get them out where some other man or men might minister to their necessity. They almost prayed for strength to come to him.

"If he croaks now we're in fer it a-plenty," Buck groaned to Hank. "If he falls they's no knowin' where this yere hoss will stray. Can't neither of us untie ourselves an' the fool hoss may pack us around till we're buzzard meat. He can drink at any waterhole, but how in blazes can we git more water when this is gone?"

He tapped the canteen Jimmy had let them keep.

"Hush yer croakin'," grunted Hank. "It's bad enough to be hashed up thisaway an' headin' fer the pen, without havin' to listen to you."

A grim smile drifted across Jimmy's face. He had heard every word and knew the thieves were drawing a part of their punishment right now. He slapped Billy's rump with the end of Fan's halter rope. He rode with Fan's head beside Billy's left hip.

As the day wore on the sun beat down on the three wounded men. Their wounds grew feverish and their thirst increased. Jimmy warned Buck and Hank that they must make their supply last until they all reached Borrego Spring and Bob Coburn.

"You don't deserve it, but I gave you more than double what I had. I won't give you another drop, no matter how you beg. I need it just as much as you do. Use a little self-control and make yours last. And don't think for a second that you can play any tricks on me. I can shoot straight when I can't do anything else."

"We ain't li'ble to try no tricks," whined Buck. "We ain't hopin' to go rackin' around over this yere dry country till the buzzards has et us right off'n this hoss. I'm burnin' up with fever right now."

"All right, Buck, but just remember that the first time you change your mind and try to start something, I am going to blow a tunnel right through the middle of both of you," promised Jimmy. "You had better pray that I don't get delirious and begin to imagine things, for I might mistake the meaning of some move you make."

From then on Buck had a new cause for worry and he rode in such terror that he shook like a quaking-aspen leaf. Hank derided and abused him without avail. The bullying coward was thoroughly scared.

IT WAS after dark when Bob Coburn was roused by the sound of horses' feet. He sat up and listened. Two horses were approaching. That he could be sure of. Also, he could hear a human voice babbling incoherently with an occasional distinct word.

He arose and waited beside his wagon, near which he had made his bed since Jimmy left. A pinto horse came out of the gloom and gave a short whinny of greeting. A sorrel at his hip seconded Billy in his friendly advances. Bob stepped forward, gun in hand.

"Jim!" he called. "That you, Jimmy?"

"Oh, Lordy, Bob Coburn, git Jimmy's guns away from 'im," croaked a frightened, hysterical voice. "He's been crazy as a loon fer two hours, swingin' them guns an' talkin' about what a nice hole he'd bore in our backs pretty soon."

"Buck Raban!" cried Bob, astonished.

"Hi, you Buck Raban!" came a thick voice. "Better keep a-goin' till dad meets us or I'll sure spoil your hide. Can't steal our plugs and get away with it. Hank, you're sort of in the way. Have to plug you to reach Buck. Sorry, but you ain't worth enough to bother with. Git, you

Buck, or I shoot when I count ten! One-two-three——"

Bob wrested the gun from Jimmy's fevered grasp and lifted him off the mare. Placing the boy on his own bed, he went to Billy and examined the condition of the men. Satisfied that they could do him no harm, he lighted his lantern and began to work over Jimmy.

"Ain't ye goin' to let us off'n this hoss?" asked Buck after a bit.

"Stay where you are until I have attended to my son and be thankful I don't finish what he began," answered Bob, sternly.

An hour after his arrival, Jimmy was resting quietly, comatose rather than asleep. Bob had carried for many years a small box filled with remedies and he knew how to use them. He had cleansed and rebandaged Jimmy's wound as well as it could be done out there on the plain, but he could not stop a slight oozing of blood. He had given him medicine to lessen his fever, and a sleeping potion.

Now he turned his attention to the robber pair and made them more comfortable. They felt great relief at being taken off the folded blanket that formed their saddle. The hours on that blanket had seemed long to them. Now they stretched out on the ground and gave their weary muscles a rest, while Bob worked over them.

Billy and Fan came in for a hearty meal and comforting care. At dawn they were hitched ahead of their mates, the jerkline knotted into one piece again and Bob on the seat, driving.

The load lay stacked beside the road, with both trailers standing there still. In the bottom of the lead wagon lay Jimmy on all the bedding Bob could rake out of the load at short notice. Sitting up in the front end, their backs against the end gate, their legs under the seat, were Buck and Hank. Bob had his own gun under his left leg and the others empty, hanging from the seat-back.

He drove the horses at a fast walk for eleven miles west, then turned north at a cross-road. Thirty miles north he struck the line of a transcontinental railroad. Here he sent two telegrams, one to Mary and one to a hospital in a town sixty-five miles east.

After sending these, he stopped a rider who was just heading out of town at a late hour. It was now nearly midnight.

"Pard, do you know Tom Payson?" he asked.

"Sure I do. Next neighbor o' mine."

"Will you stop at Tom's house, rout him out and tell him that if he meant what he said when he got yanked out o' trouble in Mexico twelve years ago, that Bob Coburn is in town waiting."

"Tom'll get that word inside of half an hour, old-timer."

An hour later a lean buckskin horse came clattering into town at a racing gait. Bob swung his lantern once and the horse turned. It came to a sliding stop beside Bob, while the rider dismounted in the spectacular fashion used by movie actors.

"Hello, Bob. What's up? I'm heeled and staked," said the man, his hand out. "Give your orders and I'll crack a lung carrying them out."

Hurriedly Bob gave him a short résumé of the last three days. He showed him the two prisoners and Jimmy.

"I want you to help me get Jimmy and these skunks loaded on the eleven-twenty when it arrives in ten minutes. Then I want you to take care of my teams for the night, hitch up in the morning and go after the stuff I left by the road.

"That stuff has to get to the mine right away, to save my name. I'll be back after my outfit as soon as I can."

"You bet your neck I'll look after things. As for the outfit, I want to go down your way anyhow, so I'll just drive it down there and look after everything until you come," said Tom. "It isn't any trouble. Glad to help out. I'll leave word for my wife and lead old Buck to ride home on."

AN AMBULANCE and a police car met the train at the hospital town. A surgeon was working over Jimmy twenty minutes later, while another attended to the pair of rascals who had hurt him.

Mary arrived before noon the next day and waited with Bob for the verdict. It came in half an hour after Mary's arrival. A white-robed nurse led them to meet a white-robed surgeon in an ante-room. He was kind and merciful, telling them the truth at once.

"You son's body is nearly drained of blood. He has the minimum amount left in his veins that will allow life to linger. There is but one method by which his life

may be saved. Transfusion of blood. I must either find two healthy, strong individuals, from whom I may draw blood in generous quantities or he will die."

Bob and Mary spoke together eagerly.

"Take me!" both said and the surgeon smiled.

"You both look vigorous, full of health. I will prepare for the operation. Miss Gaylord, will you attend to Mr. and Mrs. Coburn."

The operating room was cool and clean, glistening with cleanliness. The smell of ether made Mary think that she would always associate it with white-enameled walls after this. She waited silently for the skilful hands of the surgeon. He made the connection carefully, that there might no air bubble enter Jimmy's body, to coagulate albumen in his blood and invite the death they fought away.

Mary had asked that she be first, yearning over her beloved son in his helplessness. After her came Bob, silent, grim, eager to give all the surgeon would consent to take from his veins.

Mary lay in a white bed beside Jimmy's own, watching while her man gave his share of the life fluid. At last the surgeon set a bandage on Jimmy and one on Bob.

"There is nothing more that we can do, save wait," he said. "The operation seems successful, but we can only tell certainly after some hours have passed."

Jimmy lay in a stupor for hours, while Bob and Mary, somewhat weak themselves, watched his face in the narrow bed between theirs. A young interne sat beside the bed, holding his finger tips on the pulse in Jimmy's right wrist. His eyes watched the pallid face intently.

"The color is improving," he whispered to Mary, so Bob could hear. "The pulse has been steadily gaining in strength, ever since I sat down here. I think he will go from the stupor into a genuine sleep. It may be many hours before he wakens. He is exhausted."

The forenoon passed on leaden feet. The afternoon dragged even more slowly. Bob and Mary found soft-stepping nurses bringing them the best of blood-making foods and found, to their surprize, that they were really hungry. At four o'clock Jimmy stirred and spoke.

"Keep 'em up, Buck!" he said in a weak voice, then opened his eyes.

He looked about the room bewilderedly, then glanced at the bed so close to his right hand. His lips parted in a smile.

"Mother!" he whispered.

"Yes, Jimmy. It is mother and she is going to stay right here."

Slowly he turned his head the other way, closing his eyes. Tears crept out and rolled down his cheeks. He opened his eyes again and found himself looking straight into Bob's anxious face.

"Dad! Am I dreaming?"

"No, Jim, you're not," said Bob. "Dad and mother are right here."

"Why?" His voice was very weak.

"Because you are here," said Bob. "Tell him, Mary."

"Son," said Mary, as Jimmy turned his head to face her, "you were nearly gone when dad brought you here. The surgeon said you were almost drained of blood and must have more to save your life. So father and I let him——"

"Another debt," whispered the pale lips.

It was six hours before Bob and Mary were allowed to speak to Jimmy again. Then they only talked for two minutes.

Two days later they sat in chairs beside his bed and talked without fear of injuring the patient.

"First thing I want to say," Bob began, "is that you can't do no more gruntin' about not bein' of our blood. You haven't got more nor about six drops of other blood in ye. If that don't make ye our blood relation what would? Swimmin' in it?

"Next, I'm itchin' to tell ye how come Buck an' his partner to steal Fan an' Billy. They was mixed up with a gang that tried to pull off a hold-up, train-robbery stunt. Train stopped to take water an' the gang jumped the crew. Happened Clem Burke, Pete Linton an' two other cattlemen were havin' a game o' cards in the smoker.

"They was all heeled, packin' Sunday guns. They was five in the hold-up gang. Three cashed in right there. Buck an' Hank was outside an' lit out. Clem packs a thirty-eight, smokeless, long shell an' jacketed, soft-nose bullet. He laid out both hosses and set Hank an' Buck afoot. They squandered mighty swift.

"They was four passengers recognized Buck an' Hank, besides the engineer an' fireman. Them two is due in Florence fer about life. I reckon yer mother wants to talk now, so I'll shut up."

In Kaffir Kraals*

Upina Brings Home His First Wife

By Santie Sabalala

A Remarkable Account of Actual Savage Life Told by a Zulu Who Lived It

EDITOR'S NOTE—Since white men first penetrated the Black Continent there has been a constant struggle to understand the soul and psychology of the savage—to learn something of his ideals; his secret reactions to emotions, such as suspicion, rage, hunger, ambition, love; his instincts in the jungle; his apprehension of death; his animal lust for butchery in battle; his seeming callousness to pain; his extraordinary superstitions and occult powers. . . . Hitherto the best that has been done was in H. H. Johnston's "History of a Slave," strung second-hand on tales told him by a Mohammedan converted from savagery. But here at last we have the curtain plainly lifted!

Santie Sabalala, a pure-blooded Fingo-Zulu, of the race that brought forth Lobengula and Chaka, the most terrible leaders of savages of whom we have any record, has boldly bared the soul of the savage. Santie Sabalala, who was taught by a friendly white man, gives an account that has no single hint of the influence of civilization or religion. It is pure savagery told by an extremely intelligent man who has come out of the kraals without forgetting anything that was magnificent, strange, horrible, or funny in the life of his own people.

His style of writing is unusually good. The scenes he portrays are extraordinarily vivid—and terrible. And altogether we believe he contributes a remarkable chapter—more absorbing than fiction—to the history of man. While the portrayal of savage life from birth to settled maturity extends through six articles, each of these articles is a complete picture in itself. This is the fourth of the pictures.

FORTY-FOUR men—forty of them young and the others older—went along the *taffa* at a swinging stride. All had fur bags on their backs, made out of different animals, such as *ingula, umnundla, itakane, le-bokwe*, etc. (wildcat, meer kaat, hare, young kid).

All were filled to capacity; inside them was tabasco, which the natives grow, *ilubu isikaff* (bread), and *umbango* (dried meat); also *imbadada*—a rough kind of sandal used when they have to cross over certain places filled with a sharp-cutting, many-angled thorn that has a very irritating fluid that goes into the wound.

These thorns are very small, being only

This is an "Off-the-Trail" Article. *See foot-note on first contents page.*

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about a quarter of an inch in diameter and about the same in length. Its native name is *inkuzana* (young steer), because of the "set" of the thorns, which are not unlike the horns of a steer. In passing, it might be said that here is something else to interest the botanist, for a growth of these thorns stretches to great distances, sometimes a mile or more. When it is possible to clear them away the soil yields a very good crop of whatever may be planted.

In their left hands the men carried nothing; the right held three or four sticks over the shoulder. No native ever goes anywhere without taking a stick with him. It is his weapon of defense; and even the women, if they take a journey across country, will carry a stick or two, since they, too, are experts in "stick fighting." Even those not quite so skilful are able to deliver some strong blows, and that is all that is required.

The band wended its way down to the bed of a dried-up *si zimba* (stream) then up the opposite bank and past a growth of *ama curuma* (a kind of wild jelly-fruit) on which a secretary bird was dancing up and down in a very vigorous manner. They stood at a distance and watched it. The *somtete* ceased his antics and bent his neck and picked up with its bill from the trampled fruit something very long and wriggly. Having pulled it out, he stalked along for a few feet then with long, springing strides the bird commenced to run for about thirty feet. Having taxied this far, it flapped its wings, gained the air seemingly without effort, and with great ease, in a spiral flight flew until it was lost to sight.

The band of men kept their gaze heavenward, their eyes strained on the spot where the bird seemingly had melted into the deep blue sky of the African day.

Their expectant watchfulness was rewarded, for out of the clear sky, a short black rope came floating earthward through the air, and, with a loud thud in the stillness of the *taffa*, landed a few rods away from where the men were standing. With cautious steps they went nearer but not quite where the bird's plaything lay. The reason became plain a few seconds later. A flapping of wings overhead was heard and the *somtete* came swooping down in a long, gliding volplane and landed on the rope. With a few more energetic steps it stamped upon it.

After having bent its neck for a close look at the thing underfoot, the secretary bird walked away in a very contemplative manner, not unlike a great man of learning in his cutaway coat, with hands behind his back and a pen over his ear. In the bird's case, the body-feathers were the coat; the contour of the shoulder fold, the hands; the peculiar bunch of feathers sticking out behind the head, the pen. Thus the bird gets its civilized name.

The band of men went closer, as soon as the *somtete* had drawn away, and with their hands over their mouths, they looked at the reptile—for reptile it was—lying there mangled and torn to shreds by the bird's sharp talons. They shook their heads in wonder and admiration, remarking—

"*Si si mangaliso.*—It is wonderful!" Another added—

"*Hayi mbo! Uku mba mbindi kwazi—maanene!*—If only I could do that!"

In the meantime the secretary bird was stalking about looking for some other luckless reptile taking a sun bath and a siesta at the same time. Now and then a startled lizard shot across the bird's path, looking like an animated black garter in the scorching midday sun.

The band of men, having satisfied their curiosity, sought the beaten path once more, adjusted their fur bags on their backs, also their pipes and snuff boxes made out of small *kalabaases* or *selma*, which they carried in the lobes of their ears, a pipe in one and the snuff box in the other. The holes had been made large for this very purpose. Having begun in childhood, when first the lobe was rubbed between the index finger and thumb very hard until it became very hot and a bone needle was thrust through the flesh, a small piece of stick was put into the hole of each man's ear, and at stated intervals different sized sticks were substituted, each larger than the former, until the hole in the lobe was as large as a silver dollar.

THIS band of forty-four was on a tour in search of first wives. The rule (not the law) was that first wives should come from a community different from the one the husband had been born in. The four older men went along to oversee the young—each one responsible for ten of the young men. So they stride along swiftly—yet with graceful ease—walking as if they owned the earth, singing

an *ingomboyoku hamba*—a marching song.

Their lusty voices resounded all over the open country they passed through. *Ingadas* (wild cats) popped out of their holes to look at them; *yse untinja* (*veld* birds) wheeled over their heads; a herd of *inyamkazi* (buck) appeared from nowhere and followed them, entranced and fascinated by their singing. Since they were going after more tender game they did not harm the buck following them. Hares sat up on their hind legs, their front paws together, like soldiers presenting arms; they wriggled their noses and whiskers like some important "Captain Ginger" in civilization.

The band passed some young boys who were looking after a large herd of cattle. The boys yelled at them frantically—

"*Mola-wen, mola-wen, mola-wen.*—Good day to you, good day to you, good day to you." The band waved back at them. A cloud of dust was seen in the far distance and the band stopped their singing as it rapidly drew nearer. With their keen sight, helped by the clear air they made out a mile away, the forms in front of the dust cloud. Tall forms with bunches of black atop of long spindles and a single spindle on top of that, which in a moment or so came abreast of them. The men yelled in great delight—

"*Iciniba, iciniba.*—Ostriches, ostriches!" A flash of black and gray forms with wings outstretched and necks bent slightly, slate-gray legs that ran zigzag, the *ping-ping* of flying stones—and the flock was gone. There is a rattle of light galloping hoofs as the startled herd of buck takes fright. For a few seconds the members of the band could not see one another for the thick dust that hung around, there being no wind. The cloud settled gradually.

They laughed a great deal and when they saw each other laugh they laughed some more, for each was covered from head to foot with a light, brown dust. They called to the boys looking after the cattle, asking them where the pool was at which the cattle were watered. The boys took them to it, giggling at the sight the visitors presented. The older men's vanity was hurt and in loud voices they told the boys to "*Tola!*—Shut up!"

The boys straightened their faces, but made strange grunting noises through their noses, which only native boys can make. The band *lamba* (washed) the dust off their bodies and faces, after which they oiled their bodies slightly so as not to be scorched by the blazing sun overhead. They put on their *nciyos* (loin-cloths), packed their fur bags on sticks, adjusted the latter and resumed their journey, singing once more.

The sun set. The shadows were no more. That terrible silence that lasts about twenty minutes made itself felt.

The older men urged the band to "*Nxama, nxama.*—Hurry, hurry," for very soon the denizens of the jungle would be abroad after them, foraging for a meal. Even as they quickened their stride a harsh barking sound broke on the stillness as a lion roared; a hyena laughed with a loud sneering laugh. The world was terribly awake once more as the night-prowling beasts welcomed the darkness.

The two elder men, leading, set a yet faster pace; the stones rattled as they went down a sharp incline. They turned around a big rock and came upon a village lighted up with small fires, which were dotted here and there in the valley below. Sounds of shrill voices were borne to them in the clear air as mothers scolded and directed their children. They flitted in and out among the fires laughing with the sheer joy of living and being young.

The band were at the bottom of a *donga;* they worked up to the top of it, following the uncanny leadership of one of the older men in front. As the last man scrambled up behind the column, the mongrel dogs in the village scented them and started barking. The preparation of the evening meal was arrested as every one looked toward the *sango* (gate).

The *abafana* silently but swiftly picked up battle-ax and close-quarter weapons and secreted themselves at different points near the thorn fence that surrounded their village. The guard at the *sango* was doubled; the cross-trees were already in position. The guard had *mikonto* (spears) in their hands, their *zembes* lying near at hand on the ground. The *induna* of the village walked about to see if every man was prepared. This being a border-land village, no chances were taken of being surprized by a raiding party of the next tribe.

The band reached the gate. The *induna* challenged them—

"*Ngo mbani?*—Who are you?"

"*Si ngabo hambi.*—We are wayfarers," answered the leader.

"*Ni funa ntoni?*—What do you want?"

"*Si yoku enda.*—We have come to be engaged (to see your girls)."

"*Ni ngamani?*—What tribe are you?"

"*Ama Songela.*—We are Songelas."

"*Ni suka pina?*—Where do you hail from?"

"*Kwa Songela.*—From Songela."

"*Ungu mbani wena?*—Who are you?" meaning the leader.

"*Ndi ngo ka Songela.*—I am of the house of Songela," the voice outside the gate proudly answered, meaning he was of royal blood.

The *induna*, with visions of losing his head, hastily commanded the guard—

"*Yula i sango mba ngene abo hambi nama soka.*—Open the gate that the wayfarers and those who come to be engaged may enter." The order was carried out, and the band trooped in. The *induna* salaamed to the leader and wheeled about looking for the petty chief who commanded the whole village. He was seen to be standing by the *sibayi*, talking to some of the head men.

The *induna* waved his spear in a grand sweep and very importantly walked toward the group shouting—

"*Oka Songela; oka Songela.*—He of Songelas; he of Songelas." The group stopped talking instantly. The petty chief came forward with a wide smile on his face, murmuring:

"*Msutu, msutu!*—Your highness, your highness! *U ya pila?*—You are well?" The answer to the inquiry was, very coldly—

"*Izi nja zenu zi ya nxola.*—Your dogs make too much noise."

The petty chief gave an order that the whole breed be killed. A second or two later sounds of scampering and crying of dogs were heard, together with the excited shouting in protest of numberless small boys trying to save their pets. Some grabbed hold of their favorites and ran away and hid with them, so that the next day the petty chief broke out with perspiration every time he saw a dog or heard a bark, because the chances were that if the leader visiting the village heard them or saw one he would be deprived of his position and cattle and become nothing—for it would prove he did not know how to rule—his word was not *law* in his own village. But the royal personage did not seem to hear or notice the barking; so all was well.

THE band was shown into the council hut, and whatever was being eaten that night was served to them by the buxom and comely *ntombis* (girls) of the village. They ate with great gusto, for they had been on the road since before the sun rose. The meal was no different from what they would have got in their own community, and the petty chief apologized for not having anything special, but promised to remedy that on the morrow with a great feast for the travelers.

The older men exchanged ideas about implements of warfare and military tactics and strategy. The younger men vied with one another, guest and host, telling stories, for the warriors around the fence were called in as soon as it was known that there would be no raid. Mischievous, curious little boys and girls would peep in at the door, all goggle-eyed and giggling, and would run away. As thirty-three of the band were to leave early next morning to go to other villages, they were taken to the different huts where they were to pass the night.

Upina woke up the next morning in a strange hut. For a moment or two he could not place himself, but as it came to him in a moment that he was there in that hut and place to pick out an *umfazi* (a wife), delicious shivers ran up and down his spine at the thought. He looked toward the half-open door, got up and draped his *bayi* around his body, and strode out of the hut into the morning sunlight.

Several of the nine *abafana* who were stopping in the village on the same mission as himself were walking about; thirty of the band had left just before sunrise, in

charge of the older men. He inquired about his two special friends, and was informed that they were part of the band that had left that morning. He walked about in a very unconcerned manner, yet all the time watching the girls. His heart beat quickened as he passed several girls stamping *akquitta* (corn) especially as he noticed one in particular who favored him with a quick shy glance from under her long fluttering eyelashes.

"Ah!" thought he, "*humhle kakubi; akubo moye onjalo apa.*—She is very beautiful; there can not be another so wonderful here." So engrossed was he in his pleasant thoughts that he bumped into the wall of a hut. The girls burst into discreet laughter. He changed his mind as he noted the one he had been thinking about laughing too.

With great dignity he strode toward the *kohla* hut and walked in just as the leader in charge of his group was getting up. The leader looked up and saw that it was one of his band. He exploded:

"*Yi nto, yi nto, umfana u ya, ngena, nxana ndi vuku ka yo puma, puma u sile nknebkune.*—What is it? What is it? A young man coming in when I am getting up! Get out, get out! Are you not ashamed? You are only a boy—" For it is considered a great insult for a newly made *umfana* to come into a hut unless the older man is presentable. Upina fell over himself getting out of range of the older man's *um sindo*—temper.

A hoarse bleat sounded somewhere in the community. Upina smiled, for he knew that it meant a goat was having its throat slit, and it would be skinned and roasted later. He suddenly came upon five or six *abafana* in front of the *sibayi* for cattle, holding an *ntambo* (rope) at one end of which was the goat. The other end was tied to the horns of an ox. The group stood about solemnly, one of them grasping a native-made *slanda*—sledge-hammer. The ox stood quite still merely flicking away with its tail.

The *umfana* with the sledge-hammer spread his feet apart, spat on his hands and rubbed them together, grasped the handle of the hammer and with rippling muscles swung it and hit the ox a terrific blow right in the center of the forehead. The ox let out a windy moan and slowly collapsed to the ground, kicking in its nervous death tremors. Long after the hide had been cut away the nerves were still twitching.

A big pit was dug and a two-forked pole was set in it at each end. A long pole was set across the pit, resting on the two forks; large slabs of meat were tied on to this with *ntambo* (heavy rope) and a roaring fire was built in the pit beneath. The meat sizzled and hissed as it fried in this way, the fat bubbling all over the beef, the fire flaring up as a gob of oozy fat fell into it.

Upina went back to the hut that he was to call his home for the next few days. He found his other companions there doing the same thing he had come back to do—and that was to dress up in his best. His *nciyo* was made of very bright colored seeds. He wore a flesh dress of the same fashion of seeds strung on the sinew taken off the back of an ox and finely embroidered. He put a fine necklace around his neck and some armlets on his upper arm. He brought out a stick that was also decorated with bright seeds, laid it on the floor, and called to one of his companions to rub him on his back and torso with *amafuta*—fat.

He was rubbed until he shone like a fine piece of mahogany. He obliged his companion in turn. All this took some time, so that when both were ready they emerged from the hut feeling very superior, and paraded up and down and around the village to be seen by every one. The girls, doing most of the looking, clasped their hands and turned their eyes heavenward showing the whites only, as they expressed their admiration; others merely put their right hands to their mouths, the left folded around their neck resting under the pit of the right. They exclaimed—

"*Hayi, kenooka mbahle kakulu.*—No, I never; they are too handsome." Very superior, these two walked around looking the girls over and passing such remarks as—

"*Ndi cinya lowa u lungale.*—I think that one looks all right."

"*Hayi mbo, uya, ngena kangela inzwane zaki zi zile yi nca.*—Look at her toes; they are full of grass." For it is a tradition that the girl who has grass sticking out between the toes is too lazy to pick up her feet, and her husband will starve to death waiting for her to prepare a meal. They passed along, each noting different points of the groups of girls they passed.

Numerous little boys walked at a certain distance behind the two, unknown to them,

imitating their very important, self-satisfied walk, trying to twirl the rough sticks in the same way that the two dandies twirled theirs. Horrified mothers pounced on them and administered good beatings. The other eight members of the band came up at different times. They also were decked out in their most fetching dress.

A little girl ran up and informed them they were wanted at the *kohla* (council) hut. They wheeled about in a stately manner and wended their way to the hut. They found the older men seated, each with a big hunk of meat in his hands. Every one of them was busy eating, their mouths so full they were unable to speak. They merely motioned the young men to be seated. It being in the daytime, the meal was eaten outside of the hut on the shady side.

Small boys and girls staggered up to them with smoking hot flanks of meat. Without any delay the *abafana* got down to business. They squatted down on their haunches and bit large hunks out of the meat. It was not very often they were able to eat in the middle of the day and meat at that, the customary time for eating being at sundown. So they made the most of it, fruits and nuts were brought to them, but the main dish was *nyama* (meat) and there was an abundance of it.

LATE into the night the bargaining went on as to how much of a dowry Upina would give for the girl he had chosen to be his first wife. The father demanded fifteen head of oxen. Upina offered twelve. The father tallied off his daughter's accomplishments: She could cook, milk both cows and goats, go into the forest and gather wood for five days; she was able to look after a good-sized field; she knew how to make *amasi* (buttermilk) *utywala* (native beer), *idanti* (native brandy wine); to gather her own grass for *umtshayelo* (broom); she was not too fond of *ama ganda* (eggs). Eggs being considered a semi-mystery food, it was not thought wise for a woman to eat much of them.

The haggling and bargaining went on for several days, with neither side giving way in the least—the other *abafana* experienced the same thing, more or less, though it may be said that the native likes nothing better than a good bargain and the talk and argument that goes with it. Time being of no consequence, the matter might stretch into weeks and neither side seem to get tired of the thing.

There came a day when Upina said he would give thirteen; but the father of the girl held out for the original number—fifteen; Upina informed him that he would have to see his *uyise* (father), and left early next morning with several companions who had been more successful than he. He arrived at their own village and each went his way. Upina came upon the stalwart one playing an *ihadi*—a native one-stringed harp.

After waiting patiently until the solitary concert was over (about one hour) he informed his parent about the whole deal. The stalwart one merely replied—

"*Haba u yokum xelela akum funi.*—Good, tell him you don't want her." Upina went into one of the huts, had a meal, and started back into the night to obey his father's command. To disobey the order never entered his mind. Next morning he arrived at the girl's father's hut and informed him of his own father's words. The girl's father told him he would take fourteen.

After having a drink of *amasi*, Upina journeyed back and arrived at his own village just before sundown to find the stalwart one at meal. He sat down to eat with him without being invited. It is one of the native courtesies that if one is at meal, and a stranger and even an enemy should happen by, he may sit down without asking leave and eat of the meal, and, when he has had his fill, get up and go on his way and no one will question him or in any way molest him. This rule or tradition is a standing one and has never been broken.

When the meal was over Upina informed his parent of the new offer. The stalwart one grunted and delivered himself:

"*Kulwyrle yokuzi quba inkamo ngomso, enye kuzo eza kuba ne tole ndi yale funa elo tole kuze um xelele i simari wako nyelo tole ukuba u ya funa anga nde for inpona e ndawen yalo.*—That is good; you will drive the cattle over there tomorrow. One of the cows will calve very soon. I want the calf. You will tell your future father-in-law this: if he wants to, he can give me a cow in its stead." This was a very long speech for the stalwart one to make, but it was evident that he wanted to put one over on the prospective relative.

Next morning Upina separated fourteen of his father's cattle with the help of the

stalwart one, including the cow about to calve, and drove the small herd over. Late that night he arrived at the girl's father's hut, the cattle having been driven into the *sibayi*. His prospective father-in-law was drowsily sitting by the fireside. Upina was given a meal by a woman there. He delivered the stalwart one's message. His father-in-law-to-be nodded sleepily when informed about the alternative regarding the expected calf, but he opened his eyes wide in astonishment—just for a second.

Upina smiled at the thought that any man would be so foolish as to give away a good cow when he did not know whether the calf would be a heifer or a steer. There entered a doubt in his mind as to whether his *umfazi* was so accomplished as her father had made her out to be; but it was too late now. He could not go back; the cattle were there and he had to arrange about the date of the wedding. With these thoughts in his mind he went fast asleep sitting up. His young body had been called upon to bear a great physical strain walking forty odd miles in the last few days. He was in splendid health and the pink of condition, but he was only about fifteen years old.

The native boy matures much sooner than the civilized one, the conditions demanding it, for with the constant war raids, and many warriors getting killed, fresh ones have to take their places. Thus Upina was about full grown, being about five feet eleven inches tall, although he might grow five inches taller. He was wide in proportion, with arms like a blacksmith and strong as steel.

His father-in-law-to-be rolled over on his side, stretched out and scrambled to his feet with a yell, for in stretching out he had put his feet on the hot embers in the fireplace. Upina, awakened from his slumbers by the yell, glanced at his prospective father-in-law, lay down wrapping his *bayi* around him, and went off into the land of nod. The older man mumbled to himself, but eventually sleep claimed him too, as it had long ago the lone woman in the hut.

NEXT morning Upina and the girl's father went out to view the cattle that Upina had brought. The girl's father seemed very much satisfied. Upina asked about the date of marriage and they settled it between them that it should take place in *inyanga ezi ntatu*—in three moons. Upina reminded his parent-to-be about the cow he was to take back in the place of the expected calf. The girl's father nodded in a very absent-minded way that made Upina doubtful about his coming bride.

The girl's father led the way in and out among the cattle in the *sibayi*. In a corner, as if hiding away from them, an old dried-up goggle-eyed cow stood, her ribs looking like railings under her sagging hide, the bones already showing through the rump. The girl's father remarked in a very matter-of-fact tone—

"*Natsi inkomo ka yise nayena.*—There is the cow for thy father, son." Upina's face never moved a muscle, though he was appalled and dismayed at the offer that met his eye. He brightly asked for a rope, tied it around the horns of the cow that had been, and started out of the *sibayi* gate.

The small boys who looked after the cattle looked at him and what he has leading, in open-mouth wonder, then screamed with delight at the top of their lungs—

"*Kangela into eyi tata yo; kangela into eyi tata yo.*—Look what he is taking away; look what he is taking away!" People came to the doors of their huts for a look at the cow and the men laughed in the only way natives can laugh.

Upina, in spite of the stoicism that had become part of him, felt the trickle of a tear or two because of the mortification he was suffering. It took him two days and one night to make the trip from the village to his own with the "cow that was not, yet was." Whatever it is in cows generally that attracts lions, leopards and oxen, this bovine member of the cattle family did not possess it. Even though Upina left her to her own devices the one night spent in the jungle while he climbed a tree to sleep in, she was there below looking for him with a mournful look in the eye, waiting for him to climb down and lead her wherever he wanted.

He arrived at his own village at sundown the second day after he left the other village. Every one being at meal, he was able to smuggle the nondescript cow into the *sibayi*, the only people to see it being the three *abafana* guarding the gate. It being dark they were not able to see it as in the clear light of day. Instead of going to the stalwart one's hut and informing him of his own arrival, Upina went into the hut that he and some friends used. There he had a

meal and refused to say anything, and wrapped himself up and went promptly to sleep.

Next morning he got up, went over to see the stalwart one, and informed him about the date of the wedding. The stalwart one demanded—

"*Uze ne komo?*—Did you bring a cow?" Upina merely replied—

"*Iza uze uyi mbone.*—Come and see it." With suppessed eagerness the stalwart one followed Upina. They threaded their way in and out among the cattle and then Upina pointed to the thing that he had brought back with him, standing all alone by the side of the *sibayi* thorn fence. The stalwart one gazed a long, long time at it then turned to Upina and said quietly—

"*Yi tate apa kamsnyane yeva?*—Take it away from here right away, do you hear?" And he strode out of the *sibayi*, shoving aside any cattle that happened to be in his way, for he was a big man.

Upina got hold of the cow's tail and gave it a jerk. The cow came to life suddenly; all the other cattle gave way with lowered heads. They trotted out of the *sibayi* gate and with an extra jerk of the tail galloped to the main path. Upina gave the tail a turn that set the cow kicking, and threw stones at her. She madly tore away across the *taffa* and a few days later, it was learned, she found her way back to the other village. The stalwart one never mentioned the cow to Upina, who was busy making different fancy things for himself in preparation for his wedding day three moons hence.

NO SOONER was it known that there was to be a wedding in the country of that particular tribe—every one hearing of the coming event being invited—than all started to fashion some wonderful embroidery of colored seeds. The task was seemingly a tedious one; yet day in and day out they stuck to it—the men especially since they had nothing to do but sit around all day moving from time to time from one side of a hut to the other, in order to be always in the sunlight. The girls and women of both villages, between their work, fashioned whatever their immediate fancy suggested: *imiliza*—thigh rings made out of copper wire or cow's tail; *umkense*—rings for the arms, of bone, wood and other material; *ama gaba*—large brass or copper, sometimes iron, earrings; *imi sesane*—finger-rings, cut out of solid wood or made of grass and small seeds.

The young dandies went out on to the *taffa* (*veld*) and gathered up whatever feathers the wild ostriches had shed or lost on the numberless thorny bushes there as they roamed about or went tearing along like the wind. These feathers were for *intashe*—headdress. Great loads of *imbola* (red or white ochre) was dug up by the women wherever they found the soil and carried back to the *kraal*. The red was for personal adornment, the white to be smeared inside the walls of the principal huts that figured in the event, criss-cross work being done on the part near the thatched roof. The hut where the bride was to be was smeared white outside as well as inside. As the great day drew nearer the dress that the bride had been making for herself, with the help of some of the other womenfolk, was nearly complete. It was beautifully made. It hung from her shoulders to below her knees, the whole work being strung on the sinews taken from the back of an ox.

The great day dawned. From every point of the compass the earth was covered with people on their way to the wedding. There was not a second's cessation, for they fairly swarmed into the gate of the *kaya*. Not merely hundreds, but *mawaka*, *mawaka*, *mawaka*—thousands, thousands, thousands—poured into the village where the bride resided. There was a very appetizing smell in the air, for the father of the girl being *isi tyebe* (very wealthy), possessing lots of oxen, sheep, and goats (this being the only standard by which a native understands well-being, together with *um shlaba omkulu*—lots of land—fields that are slightly cultivated by the women, and certain pasture land granted by the king) had had roasted about half a dozen oxen, one dozen goats, and the same number of sheep, a few chickens (for the native is not very fond of chicken, popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding), fruits, nuts, vegetables galore, strawberries, bananas, wild peaches, wild plums, a kind of jelly-fruit, and others too numerous to mention, some of which are not known outside of Africa.

What was provided was not too much for the immense crowd that gathered; for they had come there (and some had traveled hundreds of miles) to enjoy themselves. There was a continual shrilling of women's sharp voices, the happy squeals of hundreds

of naked children, their little stomachs sticking out in front of them already, although they had hardly started to eat.

As one group met another group, five or six women with large bundles on their heads with squads of possibly forty or fifty children trooping behind them, all the children of each family followed their mothers. A lord and master walked at the head of each band, carrying nothing heavier than a long, black, wicked *umqayi*—fighting stick.

His *bayi* he had wrapped loosely around him below his chest, leaving his arms free. He was magnificent to look upon as he strode along with graceful ease, his family stringing out in single file behind him. All the children, even the smallest one able to walk, had a load on its head. Greetings filled the air.

"*Malo mlhabo.*—Good day, friend. *Ni vela pina?*—Where have you come from? *Nga peshe ya kom lambo.*—Way up on the other side of the river. *Yo, yo, yo! Ani hambi, ni tini ebu suku, ni na mbat ann?*—My, my, my! How you do walk; what do you do at night-time since you have children? *Si pika emzini eku tshoneni kme langa si hlale.*—We arrived at a hut just before the sun went down and stayed there." They go their different ways crying—

"*Hla kalhe.*—Fare you well."

Over there was a crowd of *amantombi* (unmarried girls) having a fine time as they clapped their hands and did a little dancing. They had their faces painted from forehead to chin and cheek to cheek with red ocher. They fancied themselves very much, thinking they looked beautiful. Every one more or less was painted in one color or the other —white or red. Some had smeared on ant-hill mud instead of the other colors. The *abafana* usually prefer white with red around their eyes.

THE sun reached its meridian and started on the long downward swing. Late in the afternoon the older men gathered together conveniently near the roasting sides of beef and started to sing. They hummed softly at first, then as the women joined in, the song became louder and louder until all the people gathered there joined in. As the sun sank in the west the music was in full swing. Half a dozen *ama gumbu we fazo* (six feet long war drums) that take three men to beat, were throbbing in time to the music. Other smaller drums sounded a sharp and enticing beat. The air was intoxicating in the extreme. The thudding of many feet commenced in dancing; the blaze of the fires lighted up the perspiring bodies and faces of the dancers.

The monotonous and hypnotizing sound of clapping, singing, and the rolling throb of the drums kept every one in a state of high-pitched excitement. There was a tremendous amount of drinking of native *u tywala* (beer) which never makes them drunk. Thus they drank and danced and sang for forty-eight hours without stopping. Some lost their voices long before that.

Upina, as the bridegroom, did not take part in the whole festival. This is the native law—for was he not going to take away their best girl? (At every wedding it is always the best girl.) Thus he sat discontentedly outside of the whole charmed circle, on one of the two *ama qegu*—oxen that he had brought along. From time to time, his friends, who numbered about a dozen or more, who had come along with him, brought him tid-bits and dainty morsels from the center of the feast. He accepted these in rather a sullen way.

Toward morning of the second day Upina notified two or three of his friends that he was ready to *tata um fazi wam ekaya*—take his wife home.

As they brought him something to eat, they went to the hut smeared white where the bride was, stepped inside and went up to her where she was sitting and informed her that her husband was waiting for her. At this point she followed the native tradition by starting to weep and shriek at the top of her voice—the tradition being that the louder a bride cries the better girl she has been in her own village and the better an *umfazi* she will be in the future. Therefore the bride cried very, very loudly.

Upina's friends tried to coax her out of the hut, but in vain; and at last, out of patience, several of them tried to get hold of her and carry her out, but the girl knocked them down right and left. Being strong on account of the laborious work that she had been accustomed to do all her life and a girl built on substantial lines like all native womenfolk, she was no mean match for any man, and the wild swings that she let go would, wherever they landed on any of Upina's devoted friends, stagger them.

It was not until the whole lot of them crowded into the hut, some pushing, others

pulling, that they got her outside the door. At sight of the struggling bride and men, the crowd surged forward to help. The assembled guests, former friends of her girlhood, men, women and children, all the whole thousands and thousands of people, wanted to help to get her to her husband.

In the fearful and terrific scrimmage that followed this onslaught many were trampled upon, but the bride still scratching, biting and striking whenever she could, and yelling as loud as the shouting, singing and general din would let her, was borne irresistibly to where Upina was waiting and hoisted on the back of the spare oxen. Torn by many hands her beautiful seed dress that had taken so much labor to make was gone. She was naked. There were others in the same plight, but it was of no consequence, that being a mere detail.

A robe was thrown over her head so that she should not know where she was going and try to escape. The two now restive oxen were prodded into action. Some one twisted their tails. They went galloping away up the *qina* (hill) and on the *taffa*, hundreds of people running alongside, Upina's friends keeping his *umfazi* on the back of her ox by holding her there, also the robe over her head. The oxen were tied together by a thonged rope attached to their horns.

The sun came up to see but a handful of people—the others having gone back—trotting beside the oxen with a living burden on each animal's back. Late that afternoon the bride and groom were near Upina's *kaya*, a hundred yards or so away. They got off the backs of the oxen. The hands of his hooded *umfazi* were placed on his shoulders and he went on with her hanging to him in this fashion. As they went she repeatedly put to him the question—

"*Si fikilena mkosi?*—Are we there, my master?"

"*Hayi, mkosi.*—No, my master," he answered, as he led her through the gate of the deserted village, for every one had gone to the wedding feast. Not until he had entered his own hut set aside for him by his father, the stalwart one, did he answer her—

"*Ewe, mkosi.*—Yes, my master." He sat her down gently on an *ukuko* (a mat) and took the robe from off her. She was wet with sweat. He gave her one of his *bayis*, saying—

"*Natsi inqawa ne cuba.*—Here is a pipe and tobacco." He handed her both. She accepted them shyly.

With a swinging swagger he left the hut to go and patronize his friends, bringing the two oxen into the *kraal*. The bride on her part sat still for a moment, wrapped the *bayi* around her to cover her breasts, for she was newly married and was not to expose her person for a certain number of days, and set about cooking her first meal in her own hut.

It may be said by way of explanation that the legal ceremony or act is when the bride is put upon the back of the spare ox that her husband has brought. Should she escape by any chance on the journey to the bridegroom's village she is allowed *inyanga ezi ntandtu*. Six moons to stay in her own kraal and the unfortunate bridegroom has to pay the same number of cattle before he can get her back again. Should he fail to do so in six moons, the girl's father is at liberty to "dower" her off to any other person, keeping the heads of cattle of the luckless first aspirant. The girl has no say in the disposing of herself whatsoever. Sometimes it happens—not very often—that she never knows who is the bridegroom until she is set down in his hut.

The setting of the bride's hands on the bridegroom's shoulders and leading her off is a sign that she is absolutely under his control. By addressing her in reply "master" he shows he has *umbumbele*—kindness. It is a mere courtesy. The taking-off of the robe in the hut is a symbol that she is under his roof and he is master here also. The giving of the *bayi* is to show that she is his property, and the pipe and tobacco her recreation that he will allow her.

SONGELA, the king, had called a *kohla* (council) in the *kohla* hut. There he spoke with great heat at the way his *umkosi* (warriors) were behaving themselves. They were getting unruly. For was it not just a few days ago that he would have had to have punished one *umfan* who had dared to insult him by coming before him in erect position, and had not gone on his hands and knees till he had been told to do so a second time by one of his horrified *ama pakati?* The petty chiefs, *ama pakatis*, *indunas* and others murmured and nodded in assent. One of their number cried out—

"Maka size apa nyoku.—Let him be brought here now." One of the new members of the *kohla* was sent out to bring the infamous person to the *kohla* hut. He arrived soon under a heavy guard of warriors who carried big *ama qudu*—knob-kerries. He was ashy gray with fear and trembled all over. Perspiration streamed down his face and body until very soon he was standing in a puddle made by his own sweat. There was a long silence broken only by the frightened man's fluttering and sharply drawn breathing. At last the king looked up and spoke to the man:

"Wena njandina! Awu kwaz ba ndi yi inkosi? Umna qa awu ku humbi. Hu na ni na? Meana nyana wesi kova abantu bako bazi 'si sukulwane se nfene, ndi pendule.—You low dog! I am the king; there is no other. How is it with you? Do you not know that? You son of an owl, you and yours are but a generation of baboons—Answer me!"

But the man could not answer; he was too terror-stricken. He gulped once. Impatiently the king ordered:

"Nqumblnama dolo wake ne zandhla zake ne kefe amehlo ake.—Cut off his knees, his hands, and take out his eyes."

Hardly had the king's voice died away when the command was carried out to the letter. He waved the whole lot of warriors away, and they carried the butchered man and his limbs and eyes off. The assembled men in the hut looked at each other uneasily. There was no knowing who might be called upon next for some fancied slight of etiquette. The king relieved them all by saying—

"Ni nga hamba, ndow ni biza nxna ndi ni funnayo.—You may go; I will call you when I want you." They trooped out of the *kolha* hut. Out in the sunlight a small crowd of naked children were staring with large eyes at a double trail of crimson that went straight toward the gate.

Another group of older children were playing *indotsi* (marbles) with *umtuma*—a native product from a bush which grows round balls, from small "stake ins" to shooting nobbins, with markings curiously and remarkably like the threes, fives and eights of "glassy" marbles that are so dear to boys in civilization. Others played *ngun*. In this game three or four *umtumas* are laid down; one boy stands back about five paces with a small stone in his hand (there's a hole on the other side of the *umtumas*). He shoots his stone at one of the *umtumas* trying to knock it into the hole. If it goes in, he wins; if not, he loses. The game is arranged so that a boy has two or three shots, all depending upon how many are playing. When sides play, more stones and holes are used. Also there are the usual number of fights.

Around the shady side of a hut some little girls prattled their childish talk. They played with dolls made out of corn cobs; others paraded dolls carved out of solid wood for them by their fond parents. Older girls played *qaps*—skipping rope. The usual clown was present—a boy who was very nimble and with great ease was able to skip in and out of the rope showing off how he could *cula imbutyi*—pick up beans. His funny antics kept the children in constant laughter. The grown-ups even came to watch him and joined in the merriment. There was a rattle of sticks as a group of boys perfected themselves in the native's manly art of self-defense—*hlalo induku*—stick fighting.

The atmosphere was very warm and stifling as it was just after the rainy season and the whole country was in the process of drying. The adults only—both men and women—wore something around the waist. The majority of children were in full dress consisting of some grease and a smile. Every one perspired freely. There was an *inkungo* (haze) caused by the terrific evaporation. Outside the *kaya* (fence) and surrounding it was the large herd of cattle belonging to the *kaya* kraal. There were a great many calves in the herd that were born during the rainy season. It may be explained here that a *kaya* or kraal represents only one part of a whole tribe.

Every *kaya* is known and designated by the leading character residing and holding sway there. The now mystical Buluwayo in Matabeleland is an instance. The name means literally "The killing place" because here those who were condemned were killed under a certain tree while the king watched the whole proceedings as he sat near by on a small ant hill.

This being the *kaya ye inkosi* (kraal of the king), it was known throughout the country as *umzi we inkosi* (the home of the king) or *umzi ka Songela* (Songela's house)—Songela being the name of the reigning monarch. His *kaya*, it need hardly be said, was the

largest in that tribe and took the place of what might be called a capital city in civilization, for here very important matters affecting the life and existence of the tribe were settled; important offenders in all the native laws were brought to trial and given whatever sentences the king thought should be meted out to the unfortunate victims.

In cases of slander and backbiting, by the way—the natives under no circumstances will allow defamation of character—the defendant and plaintiff are brought before the *inkosi*. Both sides state their cases, the *inkosi* listening to each patiently. When all is said and done, he weighs the evidence and gives out his sentence, which is carried out instantly right in front of his eyes. The sentence may be one where physical punishment has to be administered to one of the two brought before him—a plucking-out of the tongue, a red hot *si landa* thrust into one ear and then into the other so he will never be able to hear anything any more.

"*Azazi uve nto yi bi ude ufe.*—Thus says the *inkosi*." With starting eyes and horrible thick gurgling sounds and a bubbling stream of blood coming and gushing out of his mouth at the same time, the spoiled man stumbles away to die anywhere.

Should the sentence be one where there is to be a disposing of the man's property—cattle, grain, *utywala*, etc.—a squad of *um kosi* is dispatched to the part of the country where he lives, led by an *induna*, and the order carried out.

THE *inkosi* strode in and out among the playing children who hailed him (those who were not in too much awe of him) with sedate—

"*Molo bawo.*—Good day to you, father." He returned or acknowledged the greeting with a smiling—

"*Ewe, mba ntwana mbam.*—Yes, my children." He came upon groups of sprawling *abafana* sunning themselves who suddenly scrambled to their feet and greeted him in the same way as the children had done a few moments before. He did not reply to the salutation, but stood still eying them contemptuously up and down. This was so prolonged that the *abafana* became restive and uneasy under his gaze. At last he spoke—

"*Noke i bani nga sesi bayini nxana ilanga li pezulu.*—All of you be at the cattle kraal when the sun is high at the meridian." Having delivered himself thus, he strode on followed by *ngama pakati*—councilors. On coming out into the opening near the cattle kraal by the side of the *kolha* hut, he encountered a tall man with the bold triangular marking of face that spells a man who craves power, the prominent cheek bones, the long, knobbed chin, the compelling power from two piercing eyes, a strong mouth with a strong forehead. This was the *iqira* (the witch-doctor), the high priest of his calling, who had more power than the king.

Of all things alive, man or beast, he, the witch-doctor, was the only thing that the *inkosi* was in real fear of. For he wielded a wonderful power over a domain that was inscrutable to the *inkosi* and was able to *funzela* (cast a spell) on anything that he so wished. And so when they met the *inkosi's* deportment changed slightly though he was a real man and of royal blood at that. The witch-doctor's first words sent a chill down his back for he addressed him—

"*U bize abafana baze ba mamele um teto nge fazo—andi tsho?*—You have called all the young men together in order to talk to them about making battle—is this not so?" The *inkosi* looked at him in sheer fright for a moment or two, for this was the reason that he had called them together, though he had not spoken his thoughts or confided to any one. Was it mind reading or a shrewd guess? Without waiting for a reply to his query the witch-doctor remarked—

"*Kulungile ndaku ba kno ma.*—Very well, I will be present." And, turning on his heel, he went out by the *sango* (gate) across the *taffa* to his home—*um nxuma* (a cave)—somewhere along the cliffs. For an *iqira* rarely lives in the community with the tribe.

This is because in a confined space he would not be able to communicate with the *ama groti* (spirits) that are helpful to him. It is worth any one's life to approach his home, for he has a snake or two lying alongside the narrow pathway leading to his cave that would never harm him, but will bite any other person who is so foolish as to go along this pathway. Should it happen that *iqira* be wanted at the kraal, a messenger is sent. This messenger goes along the pathway until he comes to a certain stone that marks a safety zone. Here he takes his stand and shouts at the top of his voice—

"*O wena qirali kolu u ya funwa.*—O thou

great and wonderful doctor, you are wanted." Two or three times he yells until suddenly the hair at the nape of the neck creeps. And the messenger turns round to find the witch-doctor standing there looking at him—who demands:

"Kuteni u ndi bmeza? Kodwa ndi lapa lonke ixesha?—Why do you shout for me, when I have been here all the time?" The messenger stammers his apologies and delivers his message and gets away as quickly as he can.

This is the fourth of six pictures of native African life, by Santie Sabalala, each complete in itself. The next appears in the January 10th issue.

The Gunman

By George Pearson

THERE are some men who make up for their lack of aggressiveness in action by overmuch promise of it in their talk; but Lou Molson was not one of them. Neither was he one of those big, silent men, steel-eyed and taciturn to the vanishing point of politeness, for whom guns leap joyfully to their hands, spitting death at the faintest chirp of welcome trouble.

The spikes of his well-pulled mustache projected from beneath either side of a tremendous sombrero, which hid what they hinted at—a face tanned and seamed by the suns and sins of seventy Southwestern Summers. But there was so little of the man between the mustache and the boot-tops that it is scarcely worth mentioning; unless it was the large steel-blue gun which adorned either hip; and, breaking the wrinkled line of the boots, the long rowels of wicked spurs that clanked their owner's challenge to all the world.

When one saw him coming down the road, he seemed less a man than some terrible monstrosity of a large hat with its appendages of mustache points and guns, which walked by its own volition.

Neither was the gentleman from Texas taciturn, nor yet modest. Quite the reverse; his tongue clacked the clock around, mostly of his own achievements with his "lil' ole gat."

"Ah pulls mah ole smoke-wagon out, an' Ah says— 'You ——!' An' say! You'd oughter seen that feller go! Yuh could've played checkers on his coat-tails. Couldn't see him for dust. That's me; that's the kine of a man Ah am! Put'er there, ole kid!"

Yes; that was Lou.

And if it was not of past achievement that he drooled, then it was worse; for the old gentleman held firmly, and with a simple-hearted devotion that was worthy of a better cause, to the conviction that all the world was united in a plot against him. But, if in his size and in the gentler social graces he contradicted the conventional conception of what a refined gunman should be, he did so in no other essential; for he was that rarity—a man whose strength of purpose did not ooze out of him with the words he described it. He was one whose purpose hardened with barroom talk; an arrant boaster who made good his vilest threats.

And well did Neglected camp know him for what he was—a bad enemy, and the friend of undertakers.

An early acquaintance with John Barleycorn which had ripened with the years—and with the assiduity of his attachment for that variety of nourishment into an inevitable and alcoholic pickling of his body and brain—had ensured for him a degree of intense irritability, which, when combined with that cold suspicion with which he viewed the world, and the deep distrust with which he viewed the motives of all other men, rendered his periodical eruptions of hatred a subject of uneasy speculation; and in their periodical fruition, an actual menace to every peace-loving gent in the camp.

Lou's idea of playful diversion was to sit in the hot sun on the well-worn bench in front of the "Golden Fleece" and nonchalantly shoot up the dust at the feet of high-spirited horses under nervous riders; or at those of newcomers to the camp, to make them dance, just by way of handing them his calling-card. Again if it was night and time to retire, as likely as not he signified the deep-seated domesticity of his nature by the simple-hearted abandon with which he shot out the lights over the bar.

All these things being true, it boded ill indeed for a rank tenderfoot like "Michigan Mac," newly out from "back East," when he acquired what Lou Molson had lost—the packing contract on the Yellow Kid Mine. At any rate, the latter said so; and conservative opinion in the camp, when it remembered the simple sincerity with which he had expressed that view, unfeignedly believed him. And so did Michigan, and for the same reason. Also, he was glad he was in Eureka, and out of the old man's way.

"The —— was a stealin' the bread out of honest man's mouths, him with his one lung and his fancy ways, curling his little finger 'round the handle of a coffee-cup like lady-folks.

"Here that guy is, coming along with his slick ways and his brand-new outfit, taking the work at a lower price; anything to do dirt to an old-timer that was wallowing ore-sacks when he was wrastling with a milk-bottle.

"Fill 'em up agen," he ordered.

The old man had the unhappiness then of seeing the heavily-laden mules of his successful rival plod on daily past his cabin door, fulfilling his own lost contract—mine supplies up and ore down, good loads both ways, mules earning miner's wages. And his own spavined wrecks grazed contentedly on the hillside.

Most of all, though, it galled him to see how fat and sleek the mules of that rival were—with the chubbiness of Gargantuan moles; their sleek sides shining oilily in the sunlight, their heads down, their long ears twitching, grunting rhythmically with each well-chosen step as they plodded by; he watching them, and feeding his ravenous sense of injustice.

The best he could do was to sit on his heels in the dust in front of his empty corral, and curse fluently at the packers of the other outfit as they rode by, leading their strings of mules. And when they pretended not to see or hear, he leaped up and followed them out into the broad highway and walked beside them at their stirrup, cursing them to his heart's content and exhausting his rich anger.

But he derived his keenest satisfaction in catching them when they were loading up or unloading, because then they could not get away. He cursed them and their boss, profanely and heartfeltedly promised for each of them, or for all of them who had the guts of a louse and would take him up—their bellyful of fight with guns or knives or empty beer-bottles.

And such was the baleful prestige of the man, that although some of Michigan's packers were men of no mean skill with their own guns, and had even been known on occasion to fight right joyously at the merest hint of an invitation, they listened to the vindictive oratorical monologs of this terrible little old man in silence, like the beaten men they were. He had them "buffaloed."

So his just wrath climbed the higher, doubly and properly incensed that they even denied him the poor justice of that satisfaction which one right-minded gent owed another—if courtesy was not dead in these hills.

Mostly though, he concentrated his unwelcome attentions on Michigan's foreman, one Lemon, because he represented in his own person the hated authority of his master there. And Molson hid nothing that was in his heart, using this foil as the accredited channel through which his hatred flowed

swiftly to the object of it, in one vast, unending stream.

Each time his enemy's pack-trains came down the hill, Lemon in the lead, the old man, squatting on his haunches in the dust beside the road, would arise and trot beside his stirrup; and he would inquire again with savage solicitude, "When's the —— comin' over here?" or, "Did yuh tell the —— whut I tole you yesterday?"

And Lemon, good ghoul and gossip that he was, spared his young employer no whit of fine detail in his transmission of those daily eruptions of the gunman's boiling hatred.

Naturally enough, young Michigan, who knew all these things, got little comfort from any of them. All he had to buoy him up was the consciousness of his own innocence. He had violated none of the peculiar ethics of the packing craft when he had accepted, at the standard price, a contract that had already been taken from another man.

That the gunman's outfit was so dilapidated that it was no longer capable of fulfilling the contract was not his fault. And that his own outfit, by his own efforts, was capable of so doing, was not a fact that should in fairness be held against him, even by a losing business rival. And a feeling of indignation flooded over him at the palpable injustice of it.

But the sinister image of that terrible old man with his hate and his hat, his boots and his gun, began to haunt him to the destruction of all his peace, so that his soul was troubled, and he leaped in his sleep.

Less out of courage than out of the desire to remove the sword that hung over his head, the boy longed for the time when his affairs should permit him to ride to Neglected camp and end the suspense; have it out one way or the other, even though he must die in doing it. Things could not go on like this. That was certain: His gang was steadily being demoralized by the constant threats of Molson. Two men had quit already, and each new letter of Lemon became more fervent in its appeal for the moral support of his presence.

Who knew but what that vindictive old man might run amuck and slay them all? He was quite capable of it. For a long time Michigan thought of writing to him, but finally decided not to. The next day he did write, however, explaining the manner in which the contract had come to him; but tore the letter up again.

Then he decided an easy way out might be for him to send word to Lemon that he was ill and could not come, knowing his henchman would tell the old warrior, and hoping by this means that matters would right themselves, and the feud die. So he wrote to that effect. And then, still deep in an agony of indecision, and with that last letter still in his pocket, Michigan came to a decision.

"By ——!" he cried, "I'll settle it one way or another! I'll go myself!"

He saddled his best horse, and after an all-night ride, he came one sunny morning into Neglected camp.

Lemon welcomed him joyfully, with the relief of a lost child at the arrival of its father.

"Whut are yuh goin' tuh do, boss?"

"I don't know," his employer answered.

Nor did he. And it was certainly not the part of policy to have his men gabbling about the matter, anyhow.

Lemon was a Job's comforter who wasted no time in beating about the bush.

"Well, anyways, I'm shore glad you've come. Ole Lou's a-rarin'! Goin' tuh eat yuh, hide, bones, an' feathers! An' gettin' worse every day! An' the last thing he asks me every night is, are you due to show up in the mornin'? Says he's goin' tuh kill yuh on sight," he added complacently.

Then Michigan heard him outside, shouting to the packers—

"Th' ole man's come, boys!"

And the last thing Lemon said as he swung his leg over the saddle before starting up the hill, was:

"He'll be a settin' out in front of his shack by the trail, boss. Will I tell him yer here?"

Michigan shook his head in the negative. This was going to be a surprize party.

Left to himself, the boy sat on the edge of a bunk and wrestled with his problem, searching for the sanest line of action.

HE UNDERSTOOD the peculiar psychology of the gunman type; that it was like a tiger, and once having tasted human blood, yearned for more. And the more desperate the past of a gunman, the more desperate must his future be. This was a certainty born of the killer's knowledge, that once having

killed a man in a quarrel, all other men might reasonably expect the same fate if they crossed swords of words with him—unless they were quicker with a gun.

So it behooved any man with a reputation as a killer to take no chances, but to kill on sight. In short, a gunman was so inexorably chained to the evil of his own past that in order to enjoy life he must continue to deal death.

Assuredly Michigan was not a gunman. He had never carried a gun, not even in a country and at a time when most men did, except on those few occasions when some gent with a grievance had "toted" one for him, and had courteously sent him fair word to that effect, after the chivalrous custom of the country. Should he or should he not carry one now? That was the question.

If he went armed, the old gunman would undoubtedly hear of it, or quickly sense it. And when they met, it would be death for one of them. And small doubt who that should be! The blue guns would leap to the hands of that terrible figure and be spitting flame at him before he could so much as draw his own. He was no experienced killer; a gun to him was a clumsy thing of heavy metal—to the other, as responsive as the instrument to the musician, a thing sentient, quivering with life and desire to serve the hand that understood it well.

If he was to go armed, there was just one thing to do, and that was to sneak up shamefully and, from the rear, shoot an old man in the back. He recoiled. He had no desire either for the blood of his enemy if it could decently be avoided, or for a term in the penitentiary for himself. No jury would acquit him for killing a man in that fashion merely because his own life had been threatened. This was too common an occurrence in these parts.

And for the same reason, the swearing out of a warrant against an old man who barely came to his own vest buttons would only render him the laughing-stock of the trails, intensify the bitterness of the present quarrel and ensure a more desperate, later settlement of it. Those were his only alternatives—if he went armed—death or the penitentiary.

Only one other alternative remained—to go unarmed and take his chance! Then, if the old man shot on sight, in the quick passage of his soul he could mercifully know nothing about it. And if there was a delay he might still have time to leap to the old man's throat, tear his gun from him and kill him with that, or with his bare hands. Any jury would acquit him then.

Or, even if Molson did begin to shoot on sight perhaps his hand might wobble with the drink. And if they were close enough together there might still be time for one desperate spring? Very well, then, unarmed he should go!

Well, anyhow, the thing was going to be ended one way or another now. He would hunt Lou Molson up and have it out with him, man to man and face to face. The old man's cabin lay on the trail on the way to the post-office. Very well, he would go for the mail!

He sat down at the pine table and drew up a rough will, disposing of all his goods. He left it with the cook, without however informing that functionary what it was, merely bidding him to give it to Lemon that night.

It still lacked a half-hour till mail time. He filled in the time by shaving, surprized that he did not cut himself, but taking a grim satisfaction in the reflection that he would beat the undertaker out of one job anyhow.

At five minutes before the fatal hour, he squared his shoulders and started up the road, feeling like a diver who plunges from a high cliff into unknown depths of icy water; the official and next accredited victim of Lou Molson's hungry gun; and without doubt the most frightened of them all.

After all his thinking he had not the faintest idea as to what he should really do. He was prepared for such eventualities as he had torn out of the uncomforting turmoil of his mind, but he could not be sure of his own courage to act as he knew he ought to act in any one of the given situations which he had conjured up. Besides, new and totally unforeseen situations, might, and probably would, crop up, leaving him stranded in the face of an unexpected emergency. It remained to be seen as to what should happen in the dust of the roadside by Lou Molson's shack. Michigan plunged on.

He saw his man first. Lou was squatting on his heels, Mexican fashion, in front of the cabin door, twenty feet from the road. His coat was off and his soiled vest hung open as he whittled somberly with a large

and ugly looking clasp-knife at a long pine stick. For the first time in recorded history his hat was off in public, showing the shiny bald dome of his cone-shaped head.

In all other respects he was fully accoutered in all his knightly habiliments of war, with boots and spurs and wicked, steel-blue guns correctly hung on each flat horseman hip. Beside him sat one of his former packers, the last loyal retainer of a fallen house, idly rolling a brown-paper cigaret.

For a moment, at the sight of that ludicrous figure in front of him, Michigan forgot all the evil he had ever known or heard of. The situation was preposterous. He saw only the shrunken shoulders and the pitiful figure of a very old man much broken by years and hate, over whose bald head a fly buzzed exploringly, seeking a precarious foothold. So pitiful a figure surely could not be a sinister one. No bald-headed man could murder. To murder with honor one must have dignity.

At the sound of the footsteps the knife paused midway of a curling shaving. The old man glanced up so sharply that the fly flew off in alarm.

Then a sickening weakness assailed Michigan's knees, as, the picture changing, he remembered with intensified detail—and all the sinister past of that innocent-looking but terrible figure in the doorway leaped to the unwilling eye of his brain. But he drove himself forward, and as their eyes met, tried hard to force into his own an air of casualness that was the extreme antithesis of all he felt.

The Molson henchman held the unfinished cigaret in his hand, forgetting it; watching them both. He was an artist watching drama unfold its wings. But, suddenly remembering something else, his loyalty refused to stand the acid tests, and with a frightened glance at Michigan he began almost imperceptibly to edge himself away from so dangerous a vicinity as that of his chief—before the inevitable should happen.

Then in spite of that ghastly fear which was melting the marrow of his bones, a new thought came to Michigan like a slap on the back. It was he, by ——! and not this old devil who had been so foully wronged. And with that, a passionate sense of injustice flooded over him. It burned its way into his brain and there became cold anger. And it hardened the iris of his eyes into the coldness of contempt. As he passed his man, he glared squarely into those unblinking eyes in front of him, his own sparking a scorn as deep and bitter as the other's reported hatred.

Just as he was passing, Molson made a movement as though to say something; but what he saw in the boy's eyes stopped him. The latter saw only that quick movement; his liquid thought flew rebelliously to fear again, and he was certain that his time had come.

He would have leaped like a wolf at the wrinkled throat that showed in the V shaped gap of the open shirt, had he not been so far away as to make the attempt plain suicide. How he longed for a gun. Fool that he was to be without one!

And in this conflict of fear and anger that tossed his thoughts about like whirlpool straws, fear choked him again so that he could not answer Lou Molson's stillborn remark. And inwardly he cursed his own temerity for venturing forth.

And then just anger flooded him again. But even with the black surge of that still animating him, fear was yet strong enough to make him mentally gage the short distance to the shelter of the other side of the road, and to wonder desperately if, before the first shot rang out, he could possibly make that sidewise leap, and place a tree, or many of them, between himself and death.

He clenched his hands to keep his legs from running, and passed on.

Two hundred yards ahead the road buried itself snugly in a pine forest. How warmly that yawned for him. And how eagerly his own spirit responded. A terrible nausea-like seasickness gripped his entrails so that he was physically ill. But he dare not look behind him. He could imagine the old man's eyes following him, searching for just one sign of fatal weakness.

Goose-flesh set in, literally, so that the muscles of the broad target of his back quivered in anticipation of the soft "plunk" of a bullet between his shoulder-blades, as he stumbled along in the dust, under the hot sun of noon.

His jaws were clamped and his neck was stiff with keeping himself from looking back, but in spite of the crazy desire to do so, he did not once turn around to look at that watching figure in the doorway. He just stumbled on, seeing nothing.

Once, as he neared the timber, he set a foot out to run for it, and barely checked himself in time. Centuries passed, and he died a thousand bitter deaths in those few minutes and those few yards. Then he found himself at last around a bend on the road and safe, safe at last in the blessed timber. Life was sweet. Sweet!

He leaned weakly against a tree and gazed stupidly at the smear of perspiration on his hand when he withdrew it from his forehead.

At the post-office the cheery salutation of the postmaster and the casual gossip of the usual loafers came to him from a great distance, so that he neither heard nor answered them.

"Stuck up," said one of them in an aside.

The temptation to delay going back or even to take another route which would avoid that sinister figure in the doorway was a powerful one; but Michigan, by a powerful effort, resisted it. He struck out the way he had come before his resolution should have time to weaken. As he debouched from the loved shelter of the timber into the glare of the open road that faced the cabin door, he sucked in a deep preparatory breath, and made the plunge.

But there was no one there!

For a moment, exultation swept over him. Then he remembered the trees and the buildings that stood between him and home. He walked cautiously, and glanced furtively from the tail of his eye—but without appearing to do so—at each man-sized hiding object, until he gained the reassuring comfort of the thought that all of Molson's killings had been "open and shut" ones, man to man, and face to face. As he passed the cabin he saw that the door was shut and locked, and no sign of life about the place.

At home at last, he flung himself down on an unmade bunk, exhausted with the nervous strain, and lay there with relaxed muscles and outspread arms, considering through half-closed eyes, a poster on the wall. Then he slept.

When he awoke, it was to the surprize of the semi-darkness and the boisterous entrance of Lemon and his brother packers. They poured into the room noisily, upsetting chairs and shouting.

"What in ——'s name hev yuh gone an' done tuh pore ole Lou?"

Their youthful employer rose up in astonishment, still heavy with sleep. And then because he did know that he had done something and must not lessen its effect by seeming to be aware of it, he said:

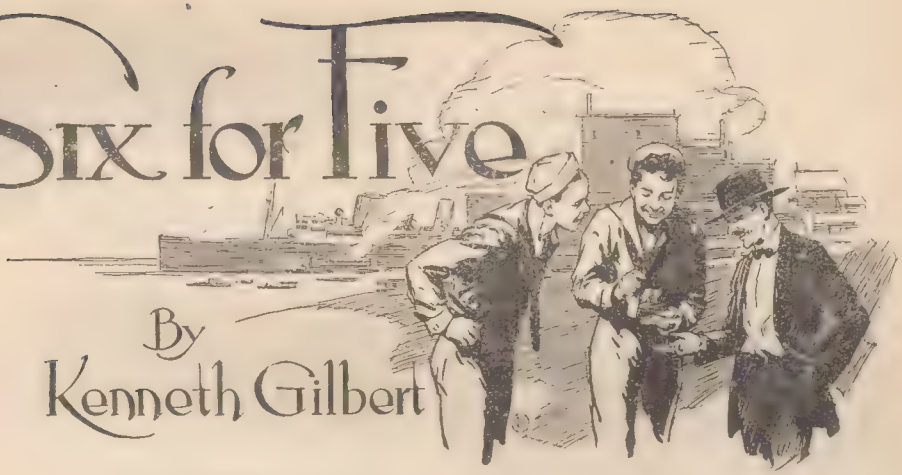
"What's that?—Nothing.—Why?"

"Why, we jus' left him over to the Golden Fleece where he's bin a-weepin' all over the bar. Cryin' drunk! Says you passed him on the trail this mornin' and wouldn't speak to him!"

HOW ABOUT IT, COWBOYS?

THERE is a more or less standing complaint that magazine artists in general are too much given to drawing subjects which they do not know thoroughly and at first-hand. Along with this, of course, is the belief that, unless they do have this thorough, first-hand knowledge, they can not draw a subject of any complexity without in some way betraying their insufficient familiarity. Look at the above drawing, you who do know steers and cowboys, and tell us whether or not the artist does or does not know his subject thoroughly. If not, in what respects does his unfamiliarity show? Also, is the artist a man or a woman? No prizes are offered, but we're likely to send a year's subscription to the reader who sends in the best answer *reaching us before December 20, 1921.* In the January 20, 1922, issue, appearing on that date, the real facts in the case will be heard at Camp-Fire, though the name of the winner can not reach print until later.

Six for Five



By Kenneth Gilbert

Author of "The Radio Ray," "The Flight of the Yellow Owl," etc.

WHEN me and "Dusty," my man-o'-war's man pal, gets orders transferrin' us to the *Luzon*, the only superdreadnought of the Asiatic fleet, we all but starts a riot of celebration on the *El Canar*, the little tub of an ex-Spanish gunboat we'd been cooped up in on the muddy waters of the Yangtze Kiang River for nearly a year and a half.

Not that we weren't a bit sorry to leave the little old tin-can, with the shipmates we'd grown to know so well, but this matter of landin' on the flag-ship—the cream job of the fleet, as the admiral's wireless operators—went straight to our heads.

But the *El Canar* boys laughed at us sort of pityingly.

"You'll find her a warm baby," says Carrigan, a gunner's mate who'd served aboard the flag-ship. "They've got a chief master-at-arms on the *Luzon* that'll make you walk turkey. He's workin' for a big bank-roll when his time is up, and you two Yangtze sailors, with your trustful ways, will be plum duff for him."

"Six-for-five bird, eh?" says Dusty, just by way of makin' a remark.

He's not payin' much attention, busy as he is with packin' his bag. And no amount of argument could have made him, or me either, believe that we weren't playin' in luck just then.

Carrigan snorted.

"Six-for-five, nothin'," he retorts. "That isn't a marker to what this money-grubbin' 'Jimmy-Legs,' Kachess, will do. But you wait, and see."

I'd better tell you, so you'll get the drift of our patter, that a "six-for-five" man in the navy is a deep-sea *Shylock*. He's always a bird that's goin' to retire when his cruise is finished, and buy himself a chicken-ranch and a couple of automobiles. He wouldn't spend a jitney to hear a bull whale sing "Asleep in the Deep;" he's got a better use for his money.

When the boys come back to the ship, broke, after pay-day, he'll loan 'em five dollars, or maybe five yen each, with the understandin' that they pay him back six on the next pay-day, which is only a few weeks away. No bluejacket ever stopped to think of what rate of interest that is, but my hunch is that it compounds up into the hundreds per cent.

And this bird has 'em cinched, because he's usually hand in glove with the ship's writer, who selects the men that are to be transferred. So long as you owe the ship's six-for-five man money, you've got about as much chance of gettin' off the battle-boat as you have of becomin' secretary of the navy. You've got to stay there till you pay up.

Usually it's a master-at-arms, or Jimmy Legs, that plays this noble rôle. He has advantages, you see. If you don't pay him principal, interest and all when it falls due, he'll most likely "frame" you for some violation of the ship's rules, and that means days in the brig, or maybe a deck court-martial.

So when Carrigan tells us that the chief Jimmy Legs of the *Luzon* was a six-for-five

man, we know right away what he means, but it doesn't worry us none. We'd been with 'em before. There's usually one on every ship.

Well, we lands on the *Luzon* all right, the day before she sails for Yokohama. She looks mighty good to us. There's an unusually fine bunch of lads in the crew, and the skipper is a regular daddy to his boys. Good food, plenty of shore leave, and many other little privileges dear to the heart of a gob, the *Luzon's* crew has, we learn. We figure that Carrigan, back on the *El Canar*, had it doped wrong. There's nothin' "warm" about the *Luzon*, so far as we can see.

Soon after we drop our mud-hook at Yokohama, Dusty comes to me with a light of joy in his eyes.

"Shorty," says he, "this is the packet for me. Why, they've got a crap game goin' in the fire-room that'll make your eyes pop out so far you can knock 'em off with a stick!"

I yawn, and turn wearily away. This Dusty, shipmate of mine, gives me a pain at times. I figure he must have cut his teeth on bone dice, and learned his letters from a pack of cards; he's that crazy about gamblin'. That's his weakness. He can't keep from a game of chance no more than a flyin'-fish can keep from flyin'.

And the pity of it is that he's the unluckiest guy at it you ever saw. Every pay-day, when he gets his money, he hands me a third of it, and tells me to keep it for him. Then he takes the remainder and hunts up a crap or poker game. And by and by he's back, broke, and beggin' me for more cash. But I stand pat, and that's the only way he ever has enough money to make shore-leave worth while.

Outside of that single fault, he's the squarest, kindest-hearted gob I've ever met, and I'll say I've met a few of them in my ten years at sea.

So when he tells me about the crap game, I get bored. I know what's comin' next.

"You ain't got a ten-spot that you'd lend me till pay-day, have you, Shorty?" he asks, lookin' at me anxiously. "I just naturally feel lucky today. Maybe I'll clean up, and then we'll both have an overnight ashore that'll be worth while."

Old, old stuff. I turns on him pretty bruskly.

"Look here, you miserable flatfoot," I tells him. "If you needed it I'd give you the shirt off my back, but I wouldn't loan you a Chinese brass cent to let you gamble. You're just naturally jinxed when it comes to games of chance. How long is it goin' to be before you get wise?"

He glares at me for that; then shrugs and turns away. I can see that I've struck pretty deep, but I wanted to make it hurt. He's got to be shocked before he'll ever tumble to himself.

I'M IN the wireless-room half an hour later, with the telephone receivers clamped on my head, and listenin' to an unintelligible dialog between a couple of Jap war-ships, when the doorway darkens. I looks up, and there's Kachess.

Since we'd been on the flag-ship we hadn't seen much of him, but we'd been hearin' a lot. Seems like he had the ship's company right under his thumb. Bein' a master-at-arms, and a chief at that, he was the head of the ship's police, and it was his word against yours if it came to the captain to decide. Consequently he was a man to be watched.

But that wasn't all. If there was one man of the crew, aside from me and Dusty, that didn't owe him money, we didn't know who it was. There was eight hundred in the crew, and at a yen apiece this bird must be cleanin up big each pay-day with his six-for-five lay. He'd never offered Dusty or me any money—that isn't the way with a sea-goin' lender. He knew we'd come to him when we went broke. And then he'd have us.

And there he is now, a lanky sort of bird that would have been tall if he's straightened up. But he's got a slight stoop to his shoulders when he walks, givin' you the impression that he's snoopin' around after some luckless gob that has broken the regulations. His eyes are small and set close together; his face is thin and his nose is long, just like a stage detective's. Altogether he looks the part of a "gum-shoe."

He has a funny little trick of rubbin' his hands together as though washin' them. His clothes are hung loosely on him, with no aim at fit or neatness. All in all, he isn't the kind of a bird that would inspire respect in any one. The navy is better without him or his kind, say I.

Havin' determined who is standin' in the doorway, I turns to my wireless set, and

begins adjustin' the tuner. I don't care to engage Kachess in conversation.

He stands there for a minute more, still washin' his hands with air, then disappears. I promptly forget all about him.

A SHORT time later, Withrow, one of the operators, comes hurryin' up. "For the love of Pete, have a look in the fire-room, Shorty!" he sings out. "Dusty is down there goin' through the bank-rolls of the black gang like a typhoon through the Yellow Sea. He's *right*; I'm tellin' you!"

I sit up straight. This was certainly important, as well as interestin'. In all the five years I'd known Dusty, I'd never heard of him comin' out of a game with a cent to the good, yet if Withrow was tellin' the truth, my pal's luck must have turned; the big day he had been prayin' for had arrived.

"Take the watch," I tell Withrow. "I want to see this with my own eyes."

But just before I reach the hatchway leadin' to the fire-room, I see Kachess comin' from below. He has a sneaky sort of look, and he just gives me a side glance and hurries by.

For a second I'm a bit surprized at the fact that he's apparently been in the fire-room; it was understood that he didn't dare go down in the smutty hole where the hard-livin' black gang hung out. Once he started after a man down there, the story ran, and just as he stepped into a compartment a man workin' above dropped a heavy Stillson wrench that struck just in front of the Jimmy Legs. Maybe it was just an accident, but Kachess took it as a warning. He beat it, and after that he let the black-gang boys pretty much alone when they were in the fire-room.

Just outside the stoke-hole compartment, I run slap into Dusty. He's boilin', ravin' mad, I can see that. There's murder in his eye. He grabs me by the shoulders.

"Where'd he go?" he demands, shakin me.

"Where'd who go?" I demands, tearin' loose his grip.

"Kachess!" he yells. "He stole two thousand yen from me. I'll take him to pieces!"

"Heave to, and take a reef in yourself!" I tells him sharply. "Have you gone nutty? You lay hands on Kachess and they'll put you on a rock pile for twenty years."

That sobers him a bit. And then I lead him out of the place. In the wireless-room he flops on a locker and tells me all about it.

IT SEEMS that when I'd turned him down for the loan of a ten-spot, he'd gone straight to Kachess, who, after a bit of wranglin' slipped him five *yen* with the understanding that it was to be paid back at the usual rate. Then Dusty had gone to the fire-room and cleaned up the crap game.

Never had luck perched on his shoulder as it had that day. He got the dice, and then proceeded to make "pass" after "pass." The black gang fell all over itself tryin' to break him. They showered him with the Japanese currency, yet with his white hat turned bottom up behind him, and rapidly fillin' with money, he continued to roll 'em.

By and by his luck broke. He lost a twenty-yen bet, and reached for the hat filled with money. It was empty.

Then some one who had just come in told him Kachess had been seen snoopin' around below decks, and had come out of the fire-room stuffin' something inside his coat. They'd all been watchin' the game so close they hadn't noticed who was standin' around, and it would have been easy for Kachess quietly to lift the money and beat it.

For there's an unwritten rule of the navy that when a master-at-arms surprizes a game of chance aboard, he can seize the stakes and turn the money into the ship's athletic fund. Of course the regulations say that he shall arrest every one in the game and take 'em to the officer of the deck, but as gobs are gobs and entitled to some relaxation, the average Jimmy Legs won't do more than appropriate the stakes for the athletic fund.

That bein' the case, there's never a bit of doubt but that Kachess had lifted the money; no one else would ever think of doin' it. And there's never a bit of doubt that the money *won't* go to the ship's fund, but into Kachess' pocket. The money-lender figures that if Dusty complains about it, he, Kachess, will merely stall about why he didn't turn over the money, and then will report Dusty for gamblin'. He had Dusty sewed up tight, we finally decide.

It hadn't been the first time it had happened on the *Luzon*, we're told by the boys who commiserate with us. This Kachess

was a hawk when a game was on. He would swoop down and nail the winnin's, and the loser would have to suffer in silence.

The whole ship's company was boilin' for a chance at him, but they had to lay off while he was aboard ship, and when he went ashore he took pains to keep out of the way.

Dusty himself was broken-hearted. 'Twas not the money alone, so much as the fact that it represented his winnin's in the first game he'd ever been "right." I felt sorry for him.

"Cheer up, old man," I tells him. "I've got a ten-yen bill here that's just yearnin' to be circulated, so we'll hit the beach, eh?"

He brightens at that, and by the time we lands on the Yokohama quay he's almost his old self again, except that he's a bit moody.

"Still moonin' about your lost fortune?" I kids him.

"Fortune be ——!" he snorts. "I'm figurin' on a way I can square yards with Kachess. No one ever trimmed me like that and got away with it.

"He took me at the rate of six for five, and then some, but I'm goin' to make him come through stiffer than that, if I have to spend the rest of my life in the navy waitin' for the opportunity."

And with that he pipes down about his troubles, but I can see he's still stewin' over 'em, and, all in all, he's pretty poor company for a night ashore.

WE'RE sittin' in a café, sippin' somethin' in long-stemmed glasses—somethin' of a red, white and blue color that we'd ordered just to show we were patriotic Americans—when Dusty, whose gaze is wanderin' around, suddenly gives an exclamation, and passes his hand before his eyes as though to wipe cobwebs off his sight.

He's lookin' at a far corner of the room. There's no one there except a civilian, an undersized little man, dapper and neat as a yacht under fresh canvas. This bird is communin' darkly, and helpin' himself out of a small bottle of somethin' you scarce see outside a museum these days.

Dusty gets up with a determined look in his eyes, and tiptoes over to this bird's table. He plumps into a chair opposite the other and says nothin', but gazes at the stranger through half-lidded eyes.

The civilian looks a bit startled, and makes a move as if to get up, but I can see Dusty signal him to stay where he is. The fellow obeys.

Then begins a chewin' match that arouses my curiosity because I can't hear a word of it. My partner talks, threatenin', it seems to me; and the stranger answers, apparently in a soothin' way. Finally the stranger grins, and nods agreement. Then he gets up and leaves, and Dusty comes back.

"What's the idea?" I asks, but he shakes his head knowin'ly, and refuses to satisfy me.

"I've confessed enough sins to you already, old shellback," he replies.

And that's the way it has to be.

NEXT afternoon me and Dusty are loafin' near the break of the quarter-deck, when a *sampan* hauls alongside the gangway, and up comes this bird we'd seen the night before. Kachess is on duty at the gangway, for the purpose of givin' the visitors the once-over.

The stranger doesn't recognize Dusty at all, but I'd a sworn I saw my pal make a signal. And the stranger seems to bat his left eye in acknowledgment. Then he approaches Kachess.

My partner takes me by the arm and pulls me toward the wireless-room for a game of "acey-deucey." And I promptly forget all about the mysterious stranger.

But the next day, and the next, he's back again. And each time Kachess meets him at the gangway, and they make talk to themselves. Then one day Kachess goes ashore with him. When this happens, Dusty chuckles.

And he won't tell me why. But the word gets around the ship that Kachess is tryin' to buy out of the service, and I kid Dusty about it.

"Looks to me as if our Jimmy Legs is goin' to spend your money on that chicken-ranch after all," I tells him.

But he just laughs, and looks wise.

AND then a day or so later this pal of mine comes bustin' into the wireless-room, all decked out in his liberty-clothes. He's a bit excited, I can see.

"Slip into your glad-rags, quick," he urges. "I put your name on the liberty list. Kachess has got his discharge, and

is paid off. You and me have some business to transact on the beach."

This listens interestin' enough, so pretty soon we're in the steam-launch, headed shoreward. Kachess, bag and baggage, had caught the boat ahead of us. When we land, Dusty grabs me by the arm and starts off just as if he knew where to go.

"Notice the *Manchuria* alongside the quay, ready to sail for the States?" he asks as we hurry along. "Well, in half an hour Mr. Kachess is goin' to be aboard that boat, bound for home. Goin' to settle down on his ranch and spend the rest of his days chucklin' over how he trimmed the easy-mark gobs of the Asiatic fleet. He's through with the outfit for all time, and she's goin' to be a better place for the likes of you and me because of that fact."

Before I can reply, he heads me into a tea-house, where a little Jap that's all smiles steers us to a table. I notice the table is located right alongside one of those paper partitions. As we sit down Dusty puts his fingers to his lips, meanin' for me to keep silence. Pretty quick I hear some one talkin' in a low tone on the other side of the partition.

Right away I place the voice. It belongs to the dapper little stranger. And then I hear the voice of Kachess.

They're not talkin' loud, and I don't get the hang of the conversation at all. It's somethin' about a copper mine over in China, and money and a box. They chew the rag for five minutes or so, but still I don't savvy what they are talkin' about. By and by I hear their chairs scrape on the floor, as though they had risen.

"You keep the box and I keep the key until tomorrow night," says the stranger. "Then I'll meet you here. That's fair enough, isn't it? You're protected all down the line."

"Sure, sure," Kachess chimes in. "Fair enough. I was just goin' to suggest the same thing myself."

Then I hear 'em comin' out. Kachess doesn't seem to notice us at all. He's carrying a black tin box about two feet long, a foot wide, and six-inches deep; and he's huggin' it tight under one arm as though it was the most valuable thing he'd ever owned.

After him comes the stranger. The little man hangs back, until he sees Kachess go out of the door, then he comes over to us, and tosses in front of Dusty a roll of bills that seems big enough for the tompion of a six-inch gun.

"Cut," he says.

Quickly my pal skins through the roll. She counts seven thousand yen, even. Half of it he pushes toward the little man.

"That's yours, as a starter," says Dusty.

Then he counts off five hundred yen more. "And that's yours, too."

"Right," says the little man, pocketing the money.

Then he lifts his hat.

"*Adios!*" says he. "I'll see you in Frisco."

"Not if I see you first," replies my pal fervently.

But the little man just laughs, and goes out.

Dusty takes a handful of bills, and crams 'em inside my jumper.

"That'll pay your *'rick'sha* fare for a few hours," he grins. "And now let's go down and watch the *Manchuria* pull out."

THE big liner is just castin' off as we reach the pier. At her rail is Kachess, washin' his hands in air, and smilin' to himself. Dusty waves him a mock farewell, but the money-grubbin' Jimmy Legs didn't see it. He's too wrapped up in picturin' the rosy future before him and the fun he's goin' to have on the money he's stolen and pried out of easy-goin' shipmates.

I grab this pal of mine by the shoulders, and shake him.

"You come through with the hang of this here and now, or I'll drop you in the bay!" I warns.

He grins, superior-like.

"——!" he says, "I thought you'd tumbled long ago. That little man, 'Keno' Dixon, is a high-class exponent of what's known as the 'California box game.'

"It's like this: he gets acquainted with Kachess, and springs the gag, casual-like, about a rich copper mine in China that can be bought for seven thousand yen. He plays the part of bein' a far-eastern representative of an American minin' company, and bein' anxious to pick up this snap on the side. Kachess, shrewd himself, pretends to fall for it, but in reality he believes Dixon is a crook. But finally Dixon makes him a proposition that fits right in with his own plans.

"They're each to put up half of the seven thousand yen. The money is placed in one roll, and goes in a tin box with a lock on it—the one you saw Kachess carrying—to be held in escrow, I believe they call it.

"The box is then locked, and given in charge of Kachess, while Dixon keeps the key, as a sign of good faith on the part of each. Then they're to meet tomorrow night and close the deal. Kachess sees he has nothin' to lose that way, as the money is in his hands all the time. Besides, he knows he's goin' to be on the *Manchuria*, three hundred miles at sea when tomorrow night rolls around. And he figures he'll have not only his own money, but Dixon's as well.

"But he won't. Kachess thought he saw the money go into the box just before the lock was snapped shut. But he didn't.

"This Dixon is a star sleight-of-hand performer, and a little matter of jugglin' a big roll of bills is plum duff for him. What he put in there was a roll of paper with a single bill as a wrapper. And Kachess won't find it out until he gets out to sea and breaks open the box.

"I told Dixon to mace him only for thirty-five hundred yen, although this Keno person would have been willin' to taken all of our Jimmy Legs' jack. That takes care of the two thousand yen he hooked from me; a thousand yen I'll turn over for him to the ship's athletic fund; and five hundred for Dixon's commission. Didn't I tell you I'd put this six-for-five gag on him with reverse English?

"Such bein' the case, we'll browse around now and see what this Yokohama town is made of."

But I'm lookin' at him askance.

"How come," I asks sternly, "how come an honest bluejacket like you to be hep to bunco, and have the acquaintance of this slicker person, Dixon?"

Dusty comes back quick.

"You slanderin' dogfish!" he says. "How d'ye s'pose, 'how come?' Three years ago, in Frisco, this Dixon nicks me for my roll by the same trick!"

INDECISION

***by* Edmund Leamy**

TWO visions lie before me—
An open road to roam—
A little patch of garden
About a little home.
And in my heart two forces
Are stirring every day—
One voice that urges "Wander!"
And one that whispers "Stay!"

And should I tramp the wide road,
The high road or the low,
East where the gay sun rises
Or west where it sets slow,
My heart would miss the glory
Of perfumed trees and loam
In grief for ties unbroken—
The little lure of home.

And should I never wander
Would ever stir the fret
Of longing for the wide road,
The trail I can't forget.
For in my heart two forces
Are stirring every day—
One voice that urges "Wander!"
And one that whispers "Stay!"

"Dead or Alive!"

A Complete Novelette

By Gordon Young

Author of "Sir Galahad and the Badger," "White Men," etc.

I HAVE no kinship with wizards, I am not able to use magic; so it was impossible for me to disappear into what is called "thin" air. But I wished that I might do just that. I wanted, and needed, some sort of fairy-book cap that would make me invisible.

I had to do everything that a cautious man, not inexperienced in having shadows and keeping them, could do by way of not letting anybody know who I was or where I was.

I was not running away. I was not hiding. I would not hide from any one. But I was into some darkly red mystery and knew but little more than the people who believed the headlines, which I did not.

The best that I can do perhaps is to tell what happened in just the way that it did happen.

II

LOS ANGELES is a city of strangers, and Robert Calversley and myself—I, however, with a name of my own choosing—were among them.

In the Mono-Mono, one of the biggest of the cliff-dweller buildings a half block or so from a park, we had two small apartments with an unlocked door between; and we did nothing but idle restfully.

Bob Calversley was a fastidious young man, a fascinating sort of fellow, ten times the gambler that I was, though he did not know one card from another, and never shook dice for anything but cigars that he did not smoke.

His more intimate friends called him "Lord Bob." This may have been because of his unusual knack of mimicry with which he could take off the stage Englishman almost as well as the elder Sothern; or it may have been because he had the social manner that would have become a peer. He did not often talk much of himself, but I was sure there had been foot-light work in his past.

I say this with emphasis: Lord Bob was as fast a man with his wits as I have ever known. His brain was electric, and with that amazing quickness to see, understand, and to act, he had the baffling gift of appearing stupid. Moreover his courage was unbreakable, his audacity enough to curl the hair of a dead Egyptian.

In fact he was one of those strangely magnetic people who could get past secretaries and to the ear of a multimillionaire. And stay there. Even more remarkably he managed social invitations into homes that were not easy to enter, and was made welcome. People liked him. Perhaps the basic reason was that Lord Bob was a gentleman to the last drop of blood in his toes.

There is something inescapably magnetic about the thoroughbred—dog, horse, man, and especially woman. After all, personality is only what is deep down inside of a man that vibrates through the flesh he wears.

Bob Calversley was a prince; and like many people of disconcerting, tireless energy, he affected the laziness and inertia of a lounge lizard.

One morning, an hour or two before noon, I left him sprawled in a chair. He was in

silken pajamas of a decidedly sunset hue. His lap was full of French magazines and morning papers. A bottle of pre-war Scotch was on the taboret at his elbow to help him get up an appetite for lunch.

The *Examiner* and *Times* had a murder mystery for their usual matutinal excitement. I looked across the headlines and uninterestedly glimpsed that some unknown man had been so savagely hacked and mutilated that the purpose was evidently to keep the body from being identified. It had been thrown onto and partly covered at the garbage dump in Elysian Park, where usually there was some kind of a smoldering fire night and day.

Apparently the murderer had hoped the body might be cremated. The clothes and linen were of good quality. It was one of those ghastly crimes that must give the public delectable shivers, since newspapers, with unerring sensitiveness for what people want, exhaust the last grim detail of every such affair, playing it up above the fall of cabinets or the death of kings.

Lord Bob through a mist of cigaret smoke good-naturedly insulted an invitation for a ride in my newly acquired auto, so I went off by myself.

All about Los Angeles are good boulevards. I turned the nose of my roadster inland and, without much attention to where I was going, smoothly ran on and on through the spring-covered foot-hills until I got to Redlands. I had lunch, looked around a bit, wasted an hour or two, then fairly flowed on the down-grade homeward. As I was entering Los Angeles a spark-plug quit work and like any other loafer went to knocking.

I pulled into the first garage I saw. A grease-stained mechanic came toward me with that look of half-amused superiority that the spider has for the fly. It is in the eyes of most garage men when they welcome strangers.

He was red headed with a wide mouth and a cheerful air. He worked as he talked. His voice had the nasal pitch of a Middle-Westerner.

"Terr'ble crime, wasn't it? Nice little buggy y' got here. But 'ey got the feller 'at done it. Them L. A. p'lice work fas', I'm tellin' you."

The hood was off and his head was over the engine.

"Terr'ble crime. I don't f'r the life of me see how a man c'n do sech a thing like that. See, here's where she cracked——"

He straightened up and studiously wiped the ruined porcelain with a blackened thumb as though I might be interested in the crack.

"This feller 'at done it, bad egg they say. They got him in a swell apartment house. Had on *pink* pajamas. Them cruel murderers do the funniest things that way. He offered the p'lice a drink when they busted in on him. They caught him in the 'Mono-Mono.' I done some work on a car onct for a woman that lived there. Swell."

Gently I inquired—

"What was the name?"

" 'Mono-Mono.' Don't know what it means, but——"

"No, the name of the—ah—murderer?"

"Oh, him? He's a terr'r. Got a record a col'mn long. Killed a lot o' men. His name's Rich-Rich-somethin'. It's all in the ev'nin' papers. But 'ey call him Everhard."

He looked up from the spark plug right into my face. I shook my head slightly, as much as to say that I had never heard of the fellow. He got the meaning I meant he should and said:

"Me neither. I'm fr'm Nebraskee, an' we got some bad'uns out there, I'll tell you. But this feller—— One o' the boys 'uz tellin' me this feller's known all over as a terr'r."

If any one had been watching me closely perhaps my yawn would have seemed a little unnatural, maybe a bit forced; but such as it was it served its purpose. I turned away and stared with empty-eyed gaze at a bulky sedan in one of the stalls behind me.

III

AMONG the things I might have done was to rush to the police station and say that I was innocent; and that anyway they had the wrong man. But Lord Bob's being in jail did not trouble me at all. I guessed at once why it had happened; and this was how:

He had looked through the newspapers and thrown them aside for the Parisian witticism that he loved as children love Mother Goose.

A heavy fist sounded on the door.

"What is it?"

The knock was repeated. No voice answered.

"I say, what d'you want?"

The answer was heavier rapping.

"The ——," said Lord Bob to himself as he impatiently kicked his way through the scattered papers and modestly sheltering his pajamas from view, slightly drew open the door.

At once a big foot came through the opening like a wedge, and from what Lord Bob saw of the bulky form he recognized in a flash the plainclothes man; and knew too that he was not alone.

"What's all the row?" asked Lord Bob with a hint of peevishness.

"A word with you, m'man," said the officer, pressing gently but firmly against the door.

"No, no," said Lord Bob waving a hand in dismissal and shaking his head, "I haven't time for book agents. Good day."

"Ow," said the officers in disgust. "Book ——! We're p'lice off'cers!"

A second and even third face came into line of vision through the slightly widening crack. Voices mumbled tensely.

"But I'm— Really you mustn't come in. I'm in my night clothes!"

"Huh," the officer grunted with something like triumph, as with effortless bulk he pushed the door wide. "Sleepin' late, eh? Out last night huh? *Red* piejamas." He said it almost accusingly, without humor.

The three men came shouldering with quiet menace into the room and closed the door. One of these men was rather short, with black hair, black eyes, and a foreign cast of face. He stared hard, and repeated in emphatic whispers over and over:

"That's *him*. That's *him*."

Lord Bob had a mystified indignant air that seemed to border on fluttering anger. "This—this is intrusion! I'll protest. I'll complain."

"Been readin' the papers, I see," said the first officer, looking about on the floor with a satisfied air.

"Have a drink?" said Lord Bob eagerly, going about on another tack.

"That's him," said the dark little foreigner as if he were almost bursting with repressed anger.

"I said, you been readin' the papers?" the first officer demanded with weighty pause between words.

"Haw," said Lord Bob, looking stupid as an owl in daylight.

"Find anything there's mornin' to inter-*rest* you?" asked the officer with the elaborate unconcern of a fellow who has a couple of aces up his sleeve.

"Beastly stupid," said Lord Bob, peering from face to face.

"Just *what* inter-*rested* you most this mornin', in the news?" the officer asked watchfully.

"I have got a wretched memory," said Lord Bob. Then perkily, "Was somebody hurt that I know?"

"You said it," the second officer chimed in Q. E. D.

"You-u murdered Buccleaugh!" shouted the little foreign man venomously.

"Who the devil is Buccleaugh?" said Lord Bob unconvincingly, looking around from the corners of his eyes.

The bulky first officer stepped forward, tapped him on the shoulder and said with that stern and not unkindly finality with which police greet their victims at the end of the chase:

"The innocent game won't help you, Thornton. We know *all* about you. Now where's the glassware? It'll go easier with you if you turn that up."

Lord Bob looked shiftily right and left. Thornton was not the name he was wearing. It was mine. From a half furtive angle he scrutinized the little foreign man, who shook and hissed and glared. He was the accuser. He was the basic witness.

"Where were you last night?" thundered the second officer.

Lord Bob hesitated confusedly, then—

"No place. Er—I mean—*no* place."

"Sit down," said the first officer.

"Have a drink!" Lord Bob said impulsively, trying to play friendly.

"Sit down," repeated the first officer.

Lord Bob collapsed.

"Don Richmond, alias Everhard, alias Thornton," said the officer with the voice of judgment, looking down grimly at the half-huddled pajama-ed form. A slight shiver visibly ran through Lord Bob, and he kept his face turned away.

"I am not—not— That isn't my name. There's been a mistake!" he said with jerky nervous protest, the very manner of denial confirming the officers' belief in his guilt.

"Where did *it* ever get the name for nerve!" exclaimed the first officer in sincere surprize and contempt.

"I've seen little one-lunged pickpockets with more guts!" said the second officer,

staring with disappointment, almost, at the man he believed to be notorious for bluff and the other arts of gambling.

The officers each pulled up a chair so that Lord Bob was between them, and they began to talk to him. The little foreign man, with vibrant restlessness, milled round and round them, watchful as a weasel, listening, examining the room, now throwing in a fragment of a sentence, now edging off with a noiseless step. From between his fingers with face downturned Lord Bob watched that fellow.

LORD BOB discovered in about a minute and a half that the police were so convinced they had a cinch case against me that the evidence—whatever it might be—would probably put me into a desperate position if I was caught; so he listened with deceptive alertness, and, even more deceptively by his very denials made them believe that he was Everhard, and guilty too.

However and why ever the case had been framed against me, he realized that it had been done with masterly detail; and in the next half-hour he grew a handful of gray hairs wondering how I could be tipped off to keep clear.

"That's him! That's him! I know him any place," said the little, foreign, tigerish fellow, drawing back his lips and moving as if to spring on Lord Bob.

"You might as well turn up the jewels," said the first officer. "We've got you dead to rights."

"Jewels. Oh! I don't know anything about jewels," said Lord Bob weakly.

"Huh," said the second officer in contempt.

"Well, we know Buccleaugh was a crook," the first officer began with a suggestion of tolerance. "It was a crooks' feud, Thornton—Everhard. Police in Europe and America have all been after him. Now you've not only stepped into *his* shoes but you put your head through a noose. He was afraid of you——"

"I wonder why?" muttered the second officer, glaring earnestly at Lord Bob's shrunken dejected form.

"For that reason he kept tabs on you pretty close. Didn't know that, did you?"

"There's been a mistake, a dreadful mistake," said Lord Bob in trembling tones, sniffling a little.

"Where were you last night between eleven and one?" demanded the first officer ominously.

Lord Bob knew very well where he had been. In bed, reading an hysterical French novel. He positively had a genius for enjoying blood and thunder. But what he tried to imagine was where on earth I had been. I had not come in until well after one o'clock. I am a late prowler and have always thought it a waste of time to sleep at night. If there is nothing better to do, I walk alone but am never lonely.

"Aw—last night? Let's see. Aw, I think—really I'm quite sure. I wasn't any place. There's been a mistake. I am not Everhard."

He spoke with a dull nervousness, an uncertain, uneasy air, one instant seeming about to straighten up and bluff but going into almost a whining collapse in the next breath; and the experienced officers recognized all the mannerisms of a hop-head trying to stall when he wasn't full of dope. They more thoroughly were convinced that he was the fellow they were after than if he had admitted it.

They tried to get Lord Bob to turn up the jewels, but he said there were no jewels, that he didn't know what they were talking about, and that they had better look out what they accused him of—he wasn't the sort of man to be imposed on. He said it in the half-whining way of a third-rate crook trying to bluff the desk sergeant.

He would not admit anything, but he did not disturb the detectives' belief that he was the fellow they were after.

"Better dress, I guess," said the first officer, "an' come 'long with us to headquarters."

"Are you arresting me?" Lord Bob cried.

"No. Oh, no. We're just takin' you down for a little talk with the chief. He'll be glad to meet you. He's heard about you. You got a name for bein' a *bad* man, Everhard!"

The voice of the officer was sarcastic, and as he stood up and looked Lord Bob over the noiseless words, "pink pajamas" formed on his nearly paralyzed lips. It was inexplicable. And Lord Bob's innocently blue eyes were upturned to him with an almost wistful hopefulness.

"But I've been wronged," said Lord Bob.

The second officer cursed under his breath, and at that moment the little foreign fellow

began jumping up and down, gesticulating and spluttering, at once triumphant and angered, and with the glee of a magician hauling rabbits out of an empty derby, began to tear at the rug under which he claimed to have glimpsed the edge of an envelop that upon inspection proved to be one that had been in Buccleaugh's pockets.

Lord Bob knew very well that the little black foreign devil had managed to plant the evidence; but as a planter he was unusually clever, for when the rug was moved several little personal papers that had unmistakably been in Buccleaugh's possession were uncovered.

This was a pretty hard jolt for Lord Bob, for it tied him up in the case whether or no he proved his identity or an alibi; but it would have taken a good deal more than that to have scattered his wits, and he looked as foolish as ever and went on with the same sort of protests. The detectives were interested in looking about the room, though they kept a watchful eye on him; but Lord Bob caught a chance to get a sentence into the foreign fellow's ear that nearly knocked him off his feet.

"You boob," said Lord Bob with icy menace, "you've spoiled the game!"

"What's that! What's that!" exclaimed the younger detective, who had caught vaguely the sound of words, and wheeling saw the fellow's face glazed with a stupid wonder.

"I said," Lord Bob answered with an indecisive, weak effort at making a threat, "I said I would spoil your game. I am an innocent man."

Then half turning he shot secretly a glance at the dark-featured little Russian that must have mystified the fellow beyond all expression. It was as much as to say: "I know all about what you are up to and if you had only let me alone the game wouldn't have been spoiled."

Lord Bob was stacking the cards against the fellow for the show-down which would come with a crash when he discovered that it was I who had been caught in the trap; and the fellow would be not only disconcerted, but alarmed.

The little Russian, who carried the Anglicized name of Paul Harrow—the "itski" perhaps having been left at Ellis Island, or maybe on board the trawler that had met a ship at sea and brought in through a fog some of the passportless passengers—the little Russian, I say, strangely quieted down from that moment, as though he had burned up all of that fiery avenging anger, and he fidgeted with his fingers, eyeing Lord Bob from furtive angles.

Lord Bob got into his clothes with one of the detectives standing by with an eagle eye peeled, though the officers on their part kept up the pretense of having merely asked him to accompany them to headquarters. The case was too big, the evidence too plausible, for them to hesitate in accepting the glory of the capture, though, after a common police practise, they had not put all their cards on the table and so revealed what their evidence was.

Bob Calversley dressed with fastidious care, making it appear that he was doing what he could to delay going with them, and now and then stopping to emphasize their belief in his guilt by his denials. All the while he was trying to come by some reasonable guess as to why and how he had been mistaken for me; and he did jump pretty close to the truth of the matter, thus:

The apartments had been engaged in advance for us by a renting agency, and I don't know that the Mono-Mono even had any record or notation that showed we were together, though the door between—ornamentally disguised as an inset of wood carving—had been even better than we had asked for in telling the agency to look around for adjoining apartments. This arrangement was imperative because Bob kept outlandish hours with novel-reading, and, too, I have perhaps grown a bit old-maidish and like to be alone when I sleep.

But as his door was nearer the elevator, and never locked—or hardly ever—because he was curled up reading some sort of trash, I had the habit of going in every time I came up, and either stopping for a chat or going on into my rooms through the "artistic" door, which did not at all look like a door when closed—as it usually was.

While he was fussing around in front of his mirror, Lord Bob was saying to himself:

"Some boy with a knife up his sleeve has spotted Don on the street. Um-yes. An' followed him, hoping for a dark spot in a lonely alley. Don has more people trying to knife him than a turkey at a newsboys' dinner. And this somebody tracked him to the Mono-Mono. Came up in the elevator, maybe. If he wasn't 'fraid to get

too close to Don's hip pocket. Saw him come into *my* apartment.

"Inquired of the elevator boy, maybe, who that was, and heard 'Thornton.' Found out also that Thornton was stopping for some time at Mono-Mono. Put two and two together and got the idea that Thornton was dwelling in 16G. Everhard picks out clever people for his enemies. He is deucedly particular about that. They must be cold, brilliant devils or he won't waste a bullet on 'em.

"Some one o' them with a great deal o' care an' malice aforethought has finished off the unlucky Buccleaugh and ribbed the evidence to nail Everhard. It's plain as a boil on your nose. Ivan the Terrible was worked into the plot to plant the papers under the rug. An' I happened to be sittin' on the wolf trap when it was sprung. Ivan the Terrible is star identification witness, and the Big —— behind the frame-up will probably tie Ivan up in a knot and boil him in oil when he finds that Mr. Ivan is as big a fool as he looks."

In some such manner Bob Calversley blindly fingered the threads out of which the mystery was woven; and so far as anything was learned to the contrary, his guess was about as accurate as any other would have been.

The detective had a small touring car—"one of the hand-wound rattle-boxes that jump from bump to bump along the road," as Lord Bob said—and loading him into it, with the bigger officer sitting between him and Harrowitski, or Harrow, they went jogging down to headquarters where Lord Bob was hustled into a dark, well-furnished, carpeted room and almost at once a half-dozen or more police officers came in, eying him with appraising steadiness and curiosity.

"A dainty little thing, ain't he?" said a bull-like plainclothes man, running his heavy low-lidded eyes from Lord Bob's gossamer lilac socks, up the slim neatly tailored body to his short silken hair that stood up evenly as a well-mowed lawn.

Lord Bob watched them sulkily: all of a type, big men, strong men, well-fed, with heads settled a little forward suggestive of the bloodhound's droop; men with strong teeth and jaws, big shoulders. Fellows in unform, some in blue with the traffic circle on their sleeves, some in khaki and leggings, edged in curiously, had a look, spoke low and made or heard half-joking remarks, and went out.

There was a stir of feet, a dropping of tone, and those in the room gave way slightly to let a rather tall man not in uniform pass by. His face was slightly wrinkled and not full, not thin, but the features were prominent. There was an unhurried assurance about him, the poise of one that used his head and was not easily angered. He came up to Robert Calversley and quietly looked at him for not more than ten seconds, then turned away and sat down at a big desk chair and took a long slim cigar from his pocket, toying with it thoughtfully before he picked up the box of matches.

AS IF by a signal the room was cleared of all but four or five men who gathered about in chairs. Some folded their hands, settling themselves like spectators, and one laying a double sheet of foolscap on a flat top table began to sharpen a pencil.

At a nod from the chief one of the men said—

"Mr. Thornton, you know that anything you say will be used against you."

For some odd reason the law requires that the prisoner shall be warned that whatever he says to an officer will be used against him; which only goes to show what a poor opinion law-makers have had of the intelligence in the heads of law-breakers. Of course it will be used against him, for why else is he questioned, cajoled, trapped, bullied?

"What is your full name?" asked the elder officer, a man named Balt, who had arrested Lord Bob.

And with that they started in on him, and at first got nothing but that he wasn't Everhard and had gone to bed early the night before; but he learned their evidence and it was enough to cinch a saint.

Paul Harrow was Buccleaugh's chauffeur.

According to Harrow, Buccleaugh had said the night before:

"I'm going to meet a man named Thornton tonight. Take a good look at him if you want to see the most famous gunman in this country. His name is Richmond, calls himself Everhard. He has killed more men than any other fellow in America—and is proud of it. I guess he would like to kill me too, but I am onto him. But get a good look at him, Paul."

The Russian chauffeur's story was that he drove Mr. Buccleaugh in from Pasadena, where he was living, late the previous evening in the limousine. They came through to the northeast corner of Eastlake Park and drawing up at the curb waited about ten minutes, when a man came along slowly, and Buccleaugh said:

"That is Thornton. Tell him I am here."

Harrow jumped down and going up to the man asked if he did not have an appointment with Mr. Buccleaugh, and the man said that he did; so Harrow opened the door, and he and Buccleaugh spoke. Harrow said he noticed at the time that they treated each other coolly in their greeting. They were polite, he said. But did not shake hands.

Harrow had a good look at the man. He would have known him again any place. It would not be possible to make a mistake.

Harrow said he remounted the seat and waited some minutes; then Buccleaugh said:

"Paul, you go back home. Get a taxi or something. Mr. Thornton prefers to drive my car to where we are going. Tell Mrs. Buccleaugh not to worry if I am out late."

Harrow said he had not wanted to do that, but orders are orders, particularly from Buccleaugh. He felt uneasy, he said. "Something" made him feel uneasy.

In the morning when he knew Mr. Buccleaugh had not come home and read of the body found in the garbage dump, he *felt* it was Buccleaugh's and had hurried down to the morgue.

The crime had been detected almost in the act because one of the park workmen living in a little house not over a hundred yards from the dumping grounds had happened to wake up and being thirsty got himself a glass of water, and chancing to look out of the window as he drank it caught the gleam of auto lights through the foliage and knew that some machine was on the dirt road that led off from the boulevard and circled the dump.

He slipped into overalls and went cautiously out to take a look; and as he drew near he saw two figures working in the refuse and was sure there was some deviltry going on. Also he had seen that the car was a fine one. He watched for a time, then hurried off to wake up a man that was living in another house near the barn where horses for park work were kept; and when he and his friend came back the car was just driving off. They yelled at it, but it seemed to plunge right at them and would have run them down if they had not jumped off the road. Then it flashed around a turn down the steep road that went north. The way the car had tried to run them down made them hurry to the dump, and having an electric torch they poked about and found the body.

Every effort had been made to keep the body from possibly being identified. Buccleaugh wore a heavy beard, and the face had not only been hacked, but scorched as if to singe away a beard. The hair too had been burned; and all this apparently *before* the body was poked into the smoldering refuse.

A more cruel and brutal mutilation could hardly be imagined.

But laundry marks remained, and the texture of the clothes, the shoes, the linen, Harrow, tradespeople, Mrs. Buccleaugh, all bore out the identification, though the pockets had been emptied. There were some faint finger-prints on the man's collar.

But at his home, in his desk, was found a card with the notation:

T. Thornton. Mono-Mono. Wil.6582.

When this was brought to light it fitted in with Harrow's story; and he and a pair of detectives hurried back from Pasadena and descended upon the Mono-Mono. He had positively identified Lord Bob as the Thornton who got into the limousine the night before at the corner of Sixth and Alvarado, just about two blocks from the Mono-Mono Apartments.

So it was that the deadly circle of evidence had been drawn; and Lord Bob sat in the center of it, smoking cigarets, and almost imperceptibly growing less and less foolish of manner as he listened to the talk of jewels. Buccleaugh had been robbed of—well,, no one hardly ventured to guess at their fabulous value, for they were crown jewels of Russia.

Buccleaugh had been—so it was discovered almost as soon as the body was identified—just one jump ahead of the police. It seemed, in fact, that all the police on earth were after him. He had been for some time successfully posing as a financier with connections in Russia; but as a matter of record he was a great crook and was reported to have made off with a million in gems, leaving certain fellow crooks holding the sack. So, not only the police had

been after him, but all the crooks he had double-crossed, and their friends.

By one of the giddy whirls of freakish fate, the law had pointed her finger at my name and said—

"Guilty!"

The evidence was convincing enough for the newspapers, which smeared Harrow's story across their editions just as soon as it was known Lord Bob had been arrested; and everything that they had in their files or that old newspaper men could remember about my reputation, was splashed into type.

In the midst of the grueling that the officers, with an experienced patience, unhurriedly, methodically trying to wear Lord Bob down, were giving, somebody came in with the evening papers and laid them on the chief's desk. As the officers paused for a moment in the inquiry to gather about and look at what the papers were saying, Lord Bob caught a glimpse of the headlines.

HE THOUGHT if I could not take a tip from the editions now strewn about the streets and keep under cover that nothing further he might do would be of any benefit to me; and that he might be pickled in a cell himself if he did not now begin to convince the officers that he meant it in claiming not to be Thornton, and was in no way connected with the notorious gambler.

Said Lord Bob, scarcely changing his outer manner but putting a subtle intangible firmness into his tone:

"You men seem to have a perfect case against this fellow Everhard. Perfect, you know. But I won't do at all. As I have told these officers—" he waved a slender, graceful hand toward Balt and Castle, the two detectives who had arrested him—"from the first, I am *not* Everhard. That Russian chauffeur was too excited to identify anybody accurately. You bring him back in here and question him again. I am not the man at all. Haven't I"—he addressed Balt—"told you from the first that I wasn't Everhard?"

The manner of his saying that was convincingly different from the inflection of his previous denials. Lord Bob was a great artist in making the tone rather than the words carry meaning; and though nobody could quite put a finger on just how his attitude had changed, yet the impression of a dandified weakling was dimmed if not effaced.

All the officers stared at him. The chief turned his steady thoughtful eyes against Lord Bob and watched without comment.

"But the stuff under your rug!" cried Castle.

"Ho!" said Balt contemptuously. "Buccleaugh's letters!"

"That chauffeur stuck them under there, I saw him." Lord Bob spoke with careless detachment, almost indifferently. He was astonishingly cool about it.

"Saw him!" shouted Balt. "Why didn't you holler, then?"

"What good would it have done? I thought it was a frame-up that *you* were in on. My Heavens, sir, didn't I insist over and over that I was not the man you wanted! And did that do any good? The way you let that Russian wander around my rooms—I thought you *wanted* him to plant evidence against me."

Balt was an honest officer and outraged. Moreover there was a subtle steelly quality appearing in Lord Bob's backbone and an edge on his voice that vaguely disturbed Balt's assurance. Besides the thing that officers the world over fear far more than any of the dangers they go into headlong is being shown up as blunderers. They dread being ridiculous.

The chief's watchful eyes narrowed and he put a finger to his chin and scratched contemplatively.

"Wouldn't it be best," suggested Lord Bob with an easy and slightly sarcastic intonation, "to have somebody who knows this—ah—Everhard person look at *me?*"

"Bring Harrow here," said the chief, leaning back in his swivel chair and rocking slowly.

Two or three men started, but Castle hurried out first.

"I want to remind you," Lord Bob went on, gazing at Balt, "that I told you over and over right along that I was not Everhard. My name isn't Everhard—or Richmond. There's been a mistake. I told you that. I have told all of you that." He swept his slender delicate hand in a little gesture that took in the room.

The chief leaned back and gazed at the ceiling. The detectives looked from time to time at him. Balt whispered audibly to the man nearest him—

"He can't get away with *that* bluff!"

Lord Bob caught up the word:

"Bluff? How on earth is it a bluff to ask that somebody who knows this Everhard should look at me?"

"You wouldn't say where you was last night," Balt exclaimed, glaring.

"I did say. I was in bed."

"You can't prove it. Harrow saw you."

"That chauffeur never saw me in his life until you brought him to me. I heard him say, 'That's him!' before he got his eyes on me—just as I opened the door."

Castle came into the room, agitated. His face flushed, and he blurted:

"Harrow's gone! He went into the reporters' room and phoned—then—he's gone!"

The chief snapped his body upright.

"Gone?" he cried. "Then get him!"

The chief's arm went out in a half-threatening command. Though nobody had suspected that Harrow, the eager witness, would need watching, still somebody had played the fool in letting him get away.

"You fellows," said the chief tensely, "haven't begun to scratch this case. By ——, if you don't have that chauffeur back here by sundown *somebody*'ll hoof a beat out in the fog belt the rest of their lives! Anybody can see this—" he swept a hand at Lord Bob—"this fellow has been stalling for time. He is not *Everhard*, but he has —— near made a monkey out of us, whoever he is. Who *are* you?"

"I? Bob Calversley, chief. I came here about three weeks ago hopin' to get into the movies. I'm from N' York, you know. An actor."

"You're an actor, all right," said the chief with tolerant sarcasm. "Now supposing you let us have some New York references. Would that inconvenience you at all?"

"Certainly not," said Lord Bob, graciously as if conferring a favor. "Now there is——"

"We'll wire," said the chief, watching for any shade of expression that might slip into Lord Bob's face.

"No, no. That'll take too long, chief. By all means, telephone. I wouldn't at all like to spend the night—er—with you."

Lord Bob was so fastidiously pleasant that the chief was plainly in doubt as to whether to smile at him or to swear.

"I think I'd like to have you spend some time with me, young man. I meet some clever young fellows in my business. I like to get well acquainted with 'em when they drop in on me occasionally. Um—yes. Now just what have you been up to?"

Bob afterward said that he had the impulse to take the chief by the sleeve and whisper the truth into his ear. He seemed a man that would understand. Lord Bob was a genius at judging men, a miraculous seer into the hearts of women. But truth is as dangerous as strong acid, and one needs be very careful where it is spilled.

"W'y, chief, I told your men over and over that they were makin' a mistake. That I wasn't the man. I got tired——"

"But," the other interrupted, scratching at the lobe of his ear and speaking slowly, "you don't want them to believe you. That is what I'm wondering about. I wonder if you think you've got a million dollars in damages piled up against the department. Newspapers too. How about it?"

They were not alone in the room. Officers were passing in and out, talking together in a hurried, serious manner. The Russian chauffeur could not be located.

Balt came in with heavy aggressive step, and gave Lord Bob a glaring look as he addressed the chief:

"Say, chief, Tom McGrew o' the sheriff's office up in Frisco 's down here after a prisoner. I 's just talkin' with him on the 'phone. He's coming right over, an' he knows that Everhard. He's over in the courthouse, an' on his way."

Balt turned around and with hands to hips stared at Lord Bob, just as much as to tell him to throw away all hope of wriggling out of the identification.

Presently in came McGrew, a man of sixty or more, somewhat Irish but slow of speech and low-voiced; a fellow who had hanged horse-thieves and shot it out with train robbers. All police officers knew and respected him.

He came in accompanied by a sergeant of detectives who had met him in the outer office, and was introduced to the chief and to Balt. Then the chief said:

"Sheriff"—McGrew was called "sheriff" because he had had the office two or three times—"we have a young man here you may know?"

He pointed toward Lord Bob who had stood up.

McGrew looked at him, half smiled in a slow, friendly, amused way and said:

"Yes, I know him. Very well. How are you, Calversley?"

"Not so very well," said Lord Bob with whimsical reference to his being where he was.

"Ain't he that Everhard?" Balt demanded with a kind of dejected loudness of tone.

McGrew shook his head, thoughtfully looking at Balt.

"No. No," he said. "I was just reading the papers when I got the word to come across here. I knew afore I come that you didn't have Everhard." McGrew turned around and eyed the chief. "You see, we're well acquainted with 'im up North. Too well at times. And f'r one thing, I don't b'lieve Everhard 'ud ever let anybody but personal friends arrest 'im any time; an' chief, I know Don Everhard wouldn't let anybody take 'im in pink piejamas."

A gust of half-repressed laughter, a few belly-shaking chuckles, came from some of the men. McGrew smiled himself and looked about from man to man, adding:

"It sounds funny. It is funny. But that's Everhard f'r you anyhow."

"Well, who is this—this—" gasped Balt, with much the expression of a man in deep water snatching for straws, as he poked a forefinger at Lord Bob.

All eyes turned onto him, like gimlets put to a barrel, and McGrew, without letting his gaze slip from Lord Bob's bland face nibbled at a plug of tobacco. He worked the chew around in his jaws for a moment or two, and with faintly amused tolerance said:

"That's something we've wondered about a time 'r two up North. I believe the Customs men used to think you did a bit of business with opium, didn't they Calversley?"

"Did they?" Lord Bob exclaimed with wide-eyed interest and apparently a little pleased by something vaguely flattering in being thought a dope-smuggler. "They never let me know. I wonder what got 'em off onto that idea?"

Out of the corners of their eyes McGrew and the Chief exchanged slow glances. This fellow was smooth as a greased eel and they knew it.

Balt and Castle had sort of edged together with the instinctive sympathy that defeated men have for each other. Their tail feathers were pretty much adroop. They were baffled but not beaten.

"Whatever his name," Balt cried a little defiantly, gesturing with a clinched fist, "Harrow identified *him*. And them papers in his room—he's the murderer!"

"I don't think Harrow will identify me again," said Lord Bob with easy assurance. "Y'see, he knows by this time he's made a mistake."

"What d' you mean?" Balt demanded, challengingly.

"Well," said McGrew, slow of tone and with that air of authority, which comes naturally with age, "there's some reasons for not thinkin' he would identify Don Everhard, either. Fact is, to me you know, it looks like such a dead open and shut case ag'in Everhard that I'd say, right offhand, there was something wrong with it. I never knew of Everhard cuttin' anybody up. But I'll tell you right now, that if Everhard had done the job, he'd never a-left that Russian fellow get away to identify him. Everhard don't work that way. All the witnesses that he leaves in sight are fellows that swear to 'self defense' for him. Don't we know up North? Time an' ag'in, and you can't touch 'im!"

The officers listened with respectful doubt to what McGrew told them. It is the immemorial right of the traveler from afar to relate strange and slightly untrue stories. Officers of rival cities are not less boastful of their clever crooks than merchants of their other industries.

"Say," demanded Balt aggressively, taking two steps nearer and putting his face down close to Lord Bob's, "what'd you mean jus' now, sayin' Harrow'd never identify you *again?* Hah? What'd you mean?"

Lord Bob answered easily, smiling pleasantly, and opening the fingers of a soft wiry hand as if the proof lay in the palm for all to see—

"Why, I mean what I said about him now knowing that he'd made a mistake."

"Mistake!" Balt snorted. "What kind of a mistake d' you——"

A burly man fairly leaped through the door, into the room. He pushed hurriedly at fellows that fell back out of his way, and talking before he got to the chief, shouted:

"The Russian's croaked! They got him down here at First an' Main—roomin' house entrance! Shot 'im—twice. Heart

'an head. Officer there phones in—they think a woman done it!"

IV

I SAT in the cheerless room of a second class downtown hotel, with evening papers scattered knee deep about me, and thought things over. I then knew much less than I have already told. I was completely in the dark, and a murky, dangerous sort of dark it was. I had no way of knowing at what minute the police might have learned enough to cause them to be lurking hopefully around the apartment next door to Lord Bob's. Perhaps, too, they had a description from the Mono-Mono servants and were looking with suspicion upon every slender man in the city, and especially if any one of them chanced to have a slight limp.

My knee was full of rheumatic sort of pains on chill damp days, but with a little watchful effort I could pretty well hide its gameness except when, like a barometer, it registered a drop in the atmosphere. Yet I had found that by limping in the other knee too I could conceal the defect of the one, and though my walk might be a little peculiar it was not unnatural enough to be out of the question.

One of the most skilful men at fooling the police that I ever knew said the two essentials in disguise were the manner of walking and of speaking; and he claimed that such things as false beards and the popular rig of disguise, dark glasses, eye patches, and all, were far more likely to get a fellow picked up by a clever detective than the lack of them was likely to get him nailed by somebody who happened to recognize him as being "wanted." A good detective, he said, could tell a disguise as easily as a cashier spots counterfeit. An exaggeration, no doubt; but a disguise that hides is pretty likely to reveal that it is a disguise.

All of which reflection was brought to my thoughts rather vividly at the time because I had no intention of going to bed and admitting no one but a bellboy with my meals on a tray. I am not sure even that it would have been the safest thing to do, for safety can not always be measured by the distance kept between yourself and a policeman. Besides if he were a shrewd-eyed bellboy, and I have never noted any particular slumbrous dullness among them, he might do some wondering as to why a man without baggage and in no pronounced state of ill health remained night and day in an unattractive, badly lighted hotel room. Many a careful man has stumbled through excessive caution, forgetful that bellboys are watchfully suspicious.

But Los Angeles is full of tourists, transients, people in for a day or two from the towns round about. Its population shifts and drifts. I had registered as from one of the beach towns. That would explain my lack of baggage. I had thought it out, carefully. So carefully in fact that with extreme reluctance, for there is nothing prodigal about me, I had left my roadster at the curb with the key in the magneto.

I felt very sure that inside of a few hours it would be so completely disposed of that the police would never hear of it again—no matter if they did connect up the license numbers with the man in the apartment next door. The auto thieves in Los Angeles, day in day out through the year, grab from five to fifteen cars and have excellent facilities for keeping them out of sight. The key in the magneto switch must have proved the lure that I hoped, for I never heard of the little roadster again.

There were many personal items in my apartment that I would much have liked to recover; but I am not the sort of person who takes chances. Which is well. By six o'clock that night the police had become so interested in the description of the man next door that they waited patiently around the Mono-Mono for "him" to put in an appearance. Also they had learned about the ornamental door between, and Lord Bob was suspected of being an accomplice in the Buccleaugh murder.

I sat in a stiff hotel-varnished chair by the window that overlooked an alley of seemingly bottomless depth, and I tried by both what I had read in the papers and what I could wildly guess at, to imagine why I had been so unmistakably linked with that ghastly crime.

It was deliberate, I knew that. But the machinery of the frame-up seemed elaborate, needlessly so. Many people had dislike for me, and some would no doubt have shown it with knife, gun or even poison if the chance came within hands' reach. But this was an organized and premeditated frame-up of almost spectacular dimensions.

There seemed but one reasonable thing

for me to do. The Russian chauffeur was a liar, so all I need do was to get in close personal touch with him and find out why.

There is no such thing as mystery when you have peeped behind the curtain. I felt that if I could not jar Mr. Harrow into a confession I would be undeserving of his respect.

After some meditation I decided that the easiest way to find out how to get in touch with him would be through telephoning the Buccleaugh home in Pasadena; and I went down to the street, intending to go to the public station in a drug store so the call could not possibly be traced back to me, when I ran into extras of monstrous type telling that the Russian chauffeur had been murdered—by myself or some female accomplice of mine. The police were a little in doubt on that essential point.

For about the only time in my life I had a feeling of bewilderment. With the chauffeur's death, the only point of contact with the mystery was snatched from me. There didn't seem to be a thread I could follow. I had counted on learning some things from him. As soon as I saw the paper I decided why he had been murdered. There is but one reason why accomplices are killed. They know too much. It is an excellent reason.

I wondered just how much, or rather how little, Lord Bob really did know. He could not say anything for the public's ear; and he was still in jail.

I went into a moving picture house to be out of people's way, and meditate. Lord Bob was the only remaining point of contact that I had; and he might be wholly ignorant. But it seemed the one chance of finding out anything. Yet I broodingly discredited my ability to disguise myself, and impersonation is not one of the things that I do best. Still, I had to reach him.

In one of the pockets of my wallet I had several business cards, selected and preserved. There is something quite convincing about presenting a card that confirms the name by which you introduce yourself; and often, just because I have been annoyed by having some person recognize or think he recognized me as the "notorious" Everhard and be all eagerness to have a word or two, I have slipped out of the identification by extending the card of some one of my friends.

Among these cards I remembered having one of Tom O'Connell, editorial department, San Francisco *Chronicle*.

After some deliberation with myself I went to the drug store and called up the police station. I said that I was O'Connell of the Chronicle, San Francisco. That my paper had just wired me to dig in on the Buccleaugh case because Calversley and Everhard were both well known up there. If I'd come right over could I have a word or two with Calversley.

"He's not sayin' anything to anybody," said the sergeant.

"How about letting me get a chance at him, anyway?"

"He's turned all the boys down cold. You're welcome to try."

"Thanks. I'll be right over."

I walked a couple of blocks out of my way to get among the second-hand clothing dealers that were open nights; and I bought a cap to replace the dark felt that I wadded up and thrust into the pocket of the long loose-fitting light-weight overcoat that I also bought.

Then I stopped at a tobacco store and got a handful of cigars that the clerk said were the "best." I know nothing of tobacco myself, though I understand that a man who is not used to a good cigar likes his own mediocre brand better than the stuff of finer flavor. These were supposed to be the best. I trimmed away and burned one so that it looked as though about a third of it had been smoked before it went out. One of the odd things about my reputation is the fact that almost every one who has heard of me seems to know that I do not smoke or drink; and for some reason it is thought unnatural for a man who needs steady nerves to do none of those things that affect them.

It was not quite eight o'clock when I came to the police station entrance. I stopped, then drew back a step or two.

A WOMAN, in a long cloak and furs, heavily veiled, with a bareheaded chauffeur at one arm and a police captain at the other, was being helped down the entrance steps toward the large, highly polished limousine at the curb.

Four or five plain clothes men were at the entrance. I spoke to one, asking who the woman was.

He looked at me with the cool, detached, half if not whole resentment that officers

show to impertinent bystanders, and, turning away before he answered, indifferently dropped the words—

"Mrs. Buccleaugh."

I stood with them, watching, until the limousine rolled off down the street.

Then I went into the station and turned into the reporters' room where I found a young fellow apparently trying to sit on his neck with his feet in the air while he prodded at the bowl of a pipe that would not draw.

He was a talkative, friendly cub. I told him I was O'Connell of the San Francisco *Chronicle* and had been at Long Beach on my vacation—visiting my sister—when the paper wired me to get onto this Buccleaugh case. I gave him a cigar to replace the stuffed-up pipe. I gave him my card, and he took the hint and carried me off importantly to the desk sergeant, going through the introduction with a flourish and putting my card under the sergeant's nose.

"This Calversley won't talk. You phoned a while ago, didn't you?—I told you he wouldn't talk. Mrs. Buccleaugh just had a look at him. He never moved a muscle. It got her, though. She nearly fainted—Yes, you can have a look at him. He's a queer bird."

The cub reporter that had taken me in tow led me back along the corridor. He knew the turnkey well enough to use his first name, and the turnkey answered with meaningless gruffness that he wondered when they were going to get tired of having him chase that fellow out.

"He won't talk," said the turnkey. "F'r nobody."

With that he screwed his head around on a thick neck and looked me over from shoe soles to cap visor; and the glance seemed to remind me of something, and I probably wouldn't have known what it was but his eyes lingered just a moment on the cigar I was carrying between my fingers.

I pulled three or four from my pocket and offered them to him. He took them with a proprietary air and seemed satisfied.

Lord Bob was brought out and stood face to face with me, but with a mesh of bars between. The cub was upon my right, and the turnkey loitered indifferently by my left. My cap was pulled rather low, the coat was buttoned to the chin. Lord Bob looked rather thoughtful but uninterested. He was thinking of other things than reporters.

"A couple o' boys from the papers," the turnkey had said.

"You are innocent," I began. "We all know that——"

It was much the sort of beginning that, I suppose, reporters use the world over when they go up against a prisoner who refuses to plead guilty. It is supposed to make him think they are sympathetic, open to reason and explanation.

At almost the first word Lord Bob jerked up his head, cocking his ears as if listening to something far off. He was too clever and alert to throw his eyes directly at me lest there be something in his surprize that might arouse the turnkey's suspicions. When he did look around it was at the cub first, then his eyes came to me; and he looked away as if bored.

He was not bored. I, who knew him well, knew that he was deeply troubled.

"But," I went on, "you must have some guess as to why they have hooked you up in this affair? Let us have it, will you?"

Lord Bob looked quickly at me, then away.

"I tol' you," said the turnkey, "he won't talk. N-aw."

Lord Bob did talk. He glanced at the turnkey as much as to say, "I'll show you." He spoke toward the cub, and the young fellow was flattered immensely.

"I was caught in a mouse trap that was set for another man," said Lord Bob.

"I'll be danged!" said the turnkey, scratching an elbow against a bar and spitting toward a mop some eight feet away.

"Just how was that?" asked the cub.

"This way," said Lord Bob enigmatically. "Nobody that knew the other man would go along to make the arrest. It's bad luck. He carries a rabbit's foot. So they picked on me."

"I don't get you?" said the cub.

"You don't?" Lord Bob asked in surprize. "Why, I've told you just what happened. But listen—" his eyes came toward my face—"a rabbit's foot isn't worth anything this time. I *know*. In the last twenty minutes I've learned a lot."

He was looking with unmistakable earnestness at me.

"Say, you're crazy," mumbled the turnkey. "There ain't been a word said to him in the last hour that I didn't hear. Mrs. Buccleaugh—she never opened her mouth!"

"But," I said, "how do you expect to get

out unless the other man—the one you were mistaken for—comes forward and gives himself up, *or* unless he knocks the frame-up to flinders?"

Lord Bob's gaze went about four feet above my head and stayed there. I could tell that he was agitated, and very much in earnest though he had spoken jerkily and with a sort of artificially fastidious accent. Now he spoke slowly, intent on making every word hit.

"I want no man to get himself hanged to keep me from spending a week or two in jail. Pleasant here. Nice people. And they'll hang the other fellow if they get him. I *know*!"

"You mean that Everhard?" asked the cub, with his mouth right up against the bars.

"Son, if you were Everhard and he meant no more to me than—well, than you do, I'd say to him, 'Mr. Everhard, the only wise thing you can do is to put a couple of oceans between you and this man's town.' I would say to him: 'Get out. Run. Duck. Hide. But *go*. You haven't a chance. I don't know what their game is, but I know *why*.' I would say—" Lord Bob was looking straight at me, and he spoke with quick earnestness, warning, imploring— "I would say: 'Don, old boy, you haven't a chance. They've sewed you up. They've got you going and coming because if you didn't chop Buccleaugh up like that, there isn't a jury under heaven but will believe you did it and half-believe you had the right to do it.' That's what I would say."

Lord Bob then avoided my eyes. He was not the sort of fellow that trembled readily, yet I saw his fingers vibrating. His body was tense. He believed that I was guilty!

The cub reporter stared with a sort of blurred expression on his face. It seemed to him that something very important had been said, but the cub couldn't just quite tell just what it was all about.

"Why—er—how, I mean, *why* do you say that, Calversley?" asked the cub, vaguely groping but patronizing.

"Because I'm a —— fool," said Lord Bob with abject earnestness, "an' talk too much!"

I asked, and tried to make the question show it was sincere—

"Why would any jury believe or half-believe Everhard had the right to butcher a fellow up like that?"

Lord Bob's eyes flashed at me. There seemed to be a faint gleam of reproach that I would try to throw dust toward his eyes, pretend ignorance, make him believe I knew so little as I seemed. Then as if a sudden doubt had leaped into his head, he cried—

"If you don't know, for God's sake don't try to find out!"

He meant that. The intenseness was so direct and striking that the cub looked up questioningly toward my face; and the turnkey, jangling his keys nervously, spat toward the mop again and offered—

"I knew that bird was loose in the upper flat. I c'n tell 'em."

Lord Bob turned away. He was done. The cub spoke to him. I spoke to him. But he would not answer. He would not look around. He was afraid to trust himself in any sort of expression. He, an actor of unapproachable excellence and audacity, was shaken.

I had no way even to begin to understand. I could not imagine what he knew or how he had learned it. The mystery was more black than ever. If a friend such as Lord Bob believed me to have murdered and mutilated Buccleaugh, I must be into a pretty bad mess. He had said he did not know what the plot was, but he knew *why*; yet he had not mentioned an enlightening name or hinted at a fact. Perhaps because he believed me guilty. There was no need to tell me what I already knew. That is what he thought.

The turnkey led him back to his cell. The cub plucked at my arm—

"It's left me up in the air."

I said—

"That is the way I feel about it, too. Very much in the air."

"Funny. Wonder what made him loosen up?"

"Loosen up? I hadn't noticed. It seemed to me he tightened up just when he started to say something," I answered to make talk.

We were again in the corridor that led to the street entrance. I had just turned to thank the young cub for his courtesies when a young fellow with a soft hat pushed back on his head came swinging into the hallway, whistling a breezy tune. He would have passed with only the rapid superior glance that he threw onto the cub; but the cub caught at his arm with:

"Hey, Blackwell, here's a newspaper man down from your own town. Blackie was

sayin' this afternoon he knew that Everhard, *personally*. Mr. O'Connell o' the *Chronicle*, meet Mr. Blackwell o' the—Why, what's matter?"

THERE was much the matter.

Mr. Blackwell was looking at me with startled amazement. He knew me. I have an unusually accurate faculty for recalling faces and names; but there was nothing about him that meant anything to my memory. No doubt I had been pointed out to him some time or other. Being a newspaper man he had fastened me in his mind's eye, and talked a bit intimately among his fellows when my name came up in the Buccleaugh case.

He did his best to come back into the appearance of composure, smiled in a twisted half-pained sort of way and put out a hand, saying:

"Glad to meet you. Thought for a minute you were somebody else. Down on the Buccleaugh case? Excuse me, will you? I've got to catch a fellow."

He rattled it off, and turned away, eager to be gone. He was absolutely sure. He knew me. The instant my back was turned, or half turned for that matter, he would make trouble.

I stopped him with a word.

"Wait," I said, neither angrily nor loud. He stopped, half facing me. From the corners of his eyes I saw the cub's face strained in puzzlement. He knew something menacing, even dramatic, was going on but could not make out what it was.

There was no use trying to make the fellow think I was not Everhard. If I did try it he would probably fool me. It was just what he wanted to do. Give him ten seconds out of my sight and he would have the station full of policemen down on my head like the dumping of a bee hive.

"Mr. Blackwell," I said, "you *are* mistaken. I am not the somebody else you spoke of. Let us go for a little walk around the block—and talk it over."

He shifted his feet and hastily glanced up and down the corridor. No one was in sight, but through the open doors voices could be heard, the tramp and scuffle of feet. Some one was talking with heavy tones into a telephone. Another voice was telling a funny story.

"All right," Blackwell said.

The cub was all eyes and puzzlement. He had an expression like that of the pup that wants to come along and looks coaxingly for the least hint of an invitation.

Seconds were important. Blackwell's thoughts were reaching every which way for a chance to delay, for the idea that would beat me. He said to the cub: "Kid, you duck in there—" accompanied by an expressive look, meant to tip him off, but which only increased his puzzlement—"and don't say anything—anything, understand? —to anybody. Don't mention it. Get me? And when I come back I'll give you a story that'll curl your hair. But don't mention it!"

By the very emphasis of his instructions Blackwell was trying to convey to the youngster that he should do just the reverse of what he was being told; but the boy was hopelessly mystified.

"Come," I said to Blackwell, and he came with a backward glance toward the cub, who stood in his tracks and stared dully.

At the door, just as we got to it, two bulky forms popped up on the steps; and I moved aside—a hand on Blackwell's arm —to let them pass. Quick as a cat, he had jerked from me and snatching at one of the detectives, but keeping his eyes on me, said—

"Balt, I want to introduce you to—to——"

He hesitated. There was no bravado about it, but a lot of quick-witted daring, for he finished—"to Don *Everhard!*"

And what could I do? I have since very much admired his daring and resourcefulness, but at the time I was not inclined to appreciate it. Had any one else around there been one half so alert, so nimble of brain, this story would have a different sort of ending. In all my life I don't think that I have ever hurt anybody that didn't really need at least a few pains; and though I was exasperatedly angered at Blackwell, at that very moment I did not blame him. He was taking a fair bold chance; and he lost.

What happened was done and over in a flash of seconds. The two detectives, Balt and Castle, were not especially dull-headed fellows but they were caught at a puzzling disadvantage. They didn't understand at all why Blackwell had called me Don Everhard, but rather felt he was trying to be smart and rub it in a bit for the blunder they had made at the Mono-Mono. By his very boldness he overplayed his hand. It often happens so. They scowled half sullenly. I put in:

"He said he would fool you. He seems to think it easily done. He said every San Franciscan knew that L. A. cops were mostly boneheads."

With that I bowed and half-backed down the steps. I half-backed because I wanted to see what was going on behind me; though for at least a quarter of a minute I had cut the ground out from Mr. Blackwell and left him waving his arms in frantic protest and explanation. In trying to explain he raised his voice, and his voice had alarming, convincing accents.

"Everhard—that's Everhard I tell you! Don Everhard! Get him—for —— sake, don't let him get away!"

I could hear plainly. More, I heard that cub's shrill hysterical echo of "Everhard's beatin' it!" His voice and Blackwell's made echoes in the corridor. From the curb I saw, over my shoulder, heads thrust out of doorways, faces inquisitively peering out. The two detectives, half afraid of being ridiculous, partly aroused, looked at me from the entrance where Blackwell stormed.

If I made a break, without further words, they would be on my heels. If I delayed, hesitated, went slow, in another three or four pulse beats they would be convinced. I was nearly cornered; but not quite.

On that instant a big touring car rounded the corner, and slowly took the downgrade before the Station entrance. I made a jump that landed me onto the running board. A gun's nose went against the fleshy jaw of the driver.

"Step on her!" I said.

He did not pause to ask questions. It was night, dim at best, so I really could not tell, but it seemed to me that his face took on something of the color of moonlight. He knew what was wanted and that was all that counted to him or to me. He released the brakes and the downgrade took the machine forward, and with a jump it answered to the gas.

The manner of my going definitely gave myself away to the watching detectives; but the way I went gave me a decided advantage. I had the jump on them. On the instant, a voice roared "Halt!" The cry of "Stop him!" rang out. Somebody ran into the street, shouting and pointing.

Two or three cars were parked at an angle with the curb. There would be slight delay in getting them under way, but the officers in pursuit would drive with a reckless fury that could not be expected from my pressed chauffeur. In anything like a chase I would soon be overhauled; and the embarrassment of making explanations would be somewhat increased by the noise of the guns. This evening, I felt, was not the time to persuade the police of my innocence.

In about the time it takes for a deep breath we had gone over a block. As I have said, I knew it was useless for me to try to get away by pushing the driver when the police cars would come like mad and stop at nothing. So I cried into his ear:

"When you slow down I'll shoot! Now *faster!*"

With that I jumped. I don't believe that he knew I left the car. But I knew it. I hit the asphalt painfully hard and with a jar that seemed to dislocate my neck. The force of the fall threw me almost flat; and for a moment I lay, not stunned, but unable to make the jarred nerves respond. I scrambled up. I did not know which way to turn, where I was or where to go. I knew as little of the city as any raw tourist the first day after he arrived from Nebraskee. But I had to do something and with decision.

The dash of the car I rode had brought people to the curb, where they stared and turned their necks with the foolish intensity that city crowds always show for anything out of the way. The sidewalks were only thinly sprinkled with people, but two or three came running toward me, and were breathlessly eager with questions.

Everything happened fast, with dazzling, dizzying rapidity. I was just saying, or beginning to say, that I was a police officer and had been pushed from the car when with roar of engine and scream of horn, like a guilty thing in torture, the pursuing automobile came down the street. I bent with my face aside to evade the sweeping rush of headlights; but above the noise I heard the shrill, nearly hysterical voice of Blackwell crying—

"That's him! Back there! Stop—he jumped——"

Whether Blackwell had thought he saw me jump or whether his hawklike eyes recognized me, I can not say. Anyway, for the second time that night he interfered with my little impersonations.

With grinding and chewing of brakes and the squeaking hiss of rubber clamped suddenly to asphalt, a half block, or slightly

less, down the street the car was coming to a stop and men springing out.

I was not frightened. I am never frightened. I had to move fast and win at every turn; and I do not like to be hurried. I remember having a very strong feeling of irritation that it was necessary for me to run. I do not like to be made to move on the jump. But I had to move that way then.

With gun in hand to emphasize the gesture, I swept back the small handful of people that had borne down onto me with their questions. They fell away like straw men in a wind. The magic that is in a gun's flourish lures fellows to turn crooked. They know that a gun's barrel is a sort of wand that reduces everybody it is pointed toward into a state of stupid non-resistance. But, on the other hand, resistance when the lone black eye of a gun is on you would be more than stupid—sheer lunacy. So there you are.

Nothing is so contemptuously dull as a group of men-in-the-street; and as they fell back, some with abject gestures of lifting their arms, others stumbling eagerly to get out of my way, I crossed the sidewalk and ran lightly and fast as I could up the first stairs I saw. It was a third class lodging house. I knew it in an instant by the musty heavy sunless odor, by the hollow empty sound such as one finds in a deserted house. A dim, dirty globe, with little more than a red thread writhing within the glass, hung at the head of the stairs.

I ran lightly as I could down the hall, saw a big red lettered sign with a hand pointing: "Fire Escape." That was what I wanted. I turned the corner, being even more careful to go lightly notwithstanding my haste. There was no red light burning at the window—and seeing there was no light an idea flew into my head. I went back down the hall and removed the sign. If no one caught sight of it, the searchers would be that much less likely to jump at once to the conclusion I might have gone that way. And I was gambling to win seconds. I hurried back, lifted the window, and as I closed it quietly I heard echoing through the dim empty hallways the voices and clatter of heavy feet.

A moment later I dropped.

IF I had not known where I was "at" before I dashed up the stairs, I was certainly turned around and standing, so to speak, on my head when I landed like a sack of flour in the alley. Here and there a vague dim yellowish light burned from above heavy doorways and iron-barred windows. The lights at the rear, I suppose, were to help nightwatchmen see burglars breaking into stores. It seemed that they gave no light that would do me good, and much that might do me harm.

I had lost even a sense of direction. It was just about as though I had been taken off blindfolded from a merry-go-round and told to point my nose north. There was a strong fishy smell about the place, and the usual acrid, almost spicy odors of a commercial alley. Also I knew because all such alleys are alike, that overhead were third and fourth class lodging houses, stratum upon stratum of dark rooms with dust-filled carpets and varnished frail pine dressers and iron beds; with here and there a front room or "suite" with yellowish curtains, a painted light shade and a couple of rockers.

I knew the wisest thing I could do was to get back into some such lodging house and lie quiet for a few hours, rather than try to go about finding my way through streets I did not know that were filled with watchful officers. They would undoubtedly search thoroughly the rooming house I passed through; they would probably watch the street and alley closely, but they could not very well search all the rooms in the block, even if they thought about it.

When Fate leads you by the hand it doesn't matter which way you point your toes. And a fellow may think he is being very clever and original when in fact he has been bound and gagged by his Fate and is being carried right along to where she wants him. I am not superstitious. No. But I have been too long a gambler not to know that luck plays with you like a woman, and at times seems propitiated when you act the fool; also that coincidences and such are no more subject to the laws of chance than that the climax in a playhouse tragedy is there by accident. I am not superstitious. No. But I am not so stupid as to believe there is nothing over and above the world watching, influencing, even judging and avenging.

I did not stand in a shadow of the alley and meditate; not at all. For a moment I looked around trying to see which way to jump. Then I settled half crouchingly against the wall and waited. Some one was coming through the alley. His feet

struck stumblingly on cobblestones. Who he was I don't know. He may have been some one that had business in the alley. Maybe a nightwatchman. I don't know. But he had sharp eyes. He stopped and by the way he stopped I knew that he had spotted me. I groaned slightly.

"Hey you. What's the matter?"

I answered with a fainter groan and the weak-voiced word—"—robbed——"

He was not a really good Samaritan, but was a little rough and gruff. Perhaps suspicious. I don't know. Anyway he came up, laid a big strong hand firmly on my shoulder. I sagged as if to fall, thereby causing him to reach out to support me with the other hand; and my recovery was miraculous and made with a gun's mouth jammed right up against his jaw.

"Up with them! Quick!" I told him.

"I'll be ——." He blurted it hoarsely.

"No doubt," I said, taking a revolver off him. "Look at the wall and get out of that coat and vest. Quick."

I worked fast. With his belt I tied his hands behind him, and using some paper, letters and such from his own pockets, stuffed them into his mouth and bound the mouth with his own kerchief. Then I tied a handkerchief over his eyes, made him lie down, and with a part of the No. 24 waxed linen line I always carried—it is very handy in an emergency—I hobbled his feet.

The whole incident took me hardly more than a minute or two; and I was quite glad it had happened because I had an extra coat and hat to add to the confusion of the description that would be out for me. Not that I expected to wear them. I did not. At least not where they could be seen. I knew very well that no kind of disguise in that neighborhood that time of night would be of much benefit to me; for the police would be snapping up everybody that could not give a good account of himself. After the fellow had been found and his story heard, along with his angry curses, the police would be searching closely for somebody in a rather worn light gray coat and vest and gray felt hat—or else in a long light-weight overcoat of brown cloth, such as I had worn into the Police Station and still had on.

Understand, I wouldn't have gone out of my way to throw that red herring, or rather gray coat, across their path; but I have a habit of trying to use everything that happens to my advantage. I find that helps a lot. Yet people say glibly that I am lucky, and offer that phrase to account for everything that I have escaped and done.

I ran a few steps up the alley to give the impression to the bound fellow's ears that I was running off; and when I came to a light burning over the doorway of what had formerly been the entrance to a saloon—the sign, "Family Entrance," was still there—I stopped a moment. By the entrance were tall windows, laced with bars; and above the windows was a fire escape. It is so much easier to get down from a fire escape than to climb into a building by the means of one that I could not overlook so fine a chance.

I did not care to go scrambling up with a dull yellow globe burning like a spotlight just where I wanted darkness, so I got a piece of stick and with some care knocked the light out the first throw.

I have no medals for feats of strength; but as far as I am concerned the doctors may starve. Their patients would probably be better off at that. So far my muscles have done whatever they have been called upon to do. I never went in for gymnastics—nor for the sort of food with which rich people commit suicide. I have a good deal more strength than people who pretend to know about such things think that I should have, considering that I am rather thin and not heavy of weight.

Anyway, having got into the gray coat and vest, with the overcoat on top of all, I went up the bars of the tall windows just about as easily as a second story worker goes up a trellis. By reaching out I could just get my fingers onto the iron of the fire escape; and strain as I might I could not get a full grasp with my right hand except by letting go of the other.

It was too dark to see. I had to judge by feeling and guesswork. I was a little reluctant to make the trial, for if I did not get a good hold when I made the lunge, or slipped, or something—almost anything, in fact—I would be likely to land on my neck some twelve feet below; and the alley was paved with cobble stones.

Of course I did not hesitate. I gave as much of a jump as I could and swung loose, catching hold and fairly making dints in the iron with my fingers by the way I grabbed onto the fire escape. Then I kicked about in the air for a few seconds while I worked

myself around so that I could climb up; and when I did get up I sat down and was quiet for some time. The window that opened onto it was locked.

Up through the alley from the street now and then came a burst of excited voices as people hurried across, gathering as a crowd always gathers when the police have game cornered—or think they have. Down the alley I knew by what I heard that the window had been raised at the fire escape from which I had jumped. I could hear voices, but not distinctly.

I looked through the locked window, watchfully. A lone globe topped by a broken shade of blue glass hung from a cord and gave out a vague, dreary light. No one was astir in the hall.

I took my pocket-knife, a little longer in the blade than the usual pocket-knife but still somewhat small for the work, and recalling what I could from the lesson given by a burglarious friend I set to work to open it. A plain kitchen knife is the best for the work because it will always enter the crack and you can hack gently at the lock and move it very easily. It was not so easy for me because the thickness at the back of the blade made the insertion a little difficult. I had to cut and squeeze and work. At the same time I was in a hurry, yet must make no noise.

Fortune usually compensates all difficulties; and I found the lock had been fastened only about a third of the way, perfunctorily. It opened at once. I raised the window, stepped down into the hallway, with my breath blew away such of the tiny shavings as were more evident, and locked the window. I did not care what might be discovered about the window in the morning, but I didn't want to have some curious person soon attracting the attention of the police to the cuts and tiny bits of fresh cut wood.

I smoothed out my clothes as best I could. I must have looked rather full chested with so much on under the long top coat. The cap was put a little rakishly to one side, but not drawn down low over my face. An obvious attempt at concealment draws attention, then curiosity. I know a very successful middle-aged crook—few successful crooks are middle-aged—whose schooling has not been in books and whose operations lack a certain touch of refinement; but his words are that "nerve an' guts is all the front you need any ol' time." Perhaps so.

I wanted to walk without making noise and yet it would not have been wise to go furtively, or even on tip-toes; so right from the first I began listening at each door, then, peeping at the keyhole to see whether or not a light was within, I tried the door. What I did want was to find some room where I might lurk the night out and leave with the coming of the crowds onto the streets in the morning. When I heard breathing or movement I passed on quietly. A rooming-house lock is very easily opened if one has a bit of wire and the necessary cunning in the wrist; but I had neither the wire nor the wrist.

It began to look as though I would have to knock on some occupied room and persuade the occupant to receive me as a guest. I did not want to do this. I had had troubles enough with other people for one night, or thought so. So I went on down the hall. Watchful, alert, I stepped along, touching door-knobs with sensitive fingers and moving them almost as noiselessly as a man who has made his livelihood out of handling safe-knobs instead of cards. I turned a corner and came under another globe, slightly brighter, right at the head of the entrance stairs from the street. On the wall was fastened the gong with a twisted cord hanging down. On the card under it was the notice that after 9 o'clock p. m. please do not ring but knock at Room 24. On a table under the gong was a ledger, opened and full of names.

I was tempted to go to Room 24 and apply; and stood for a moment looking this way and that, when a door behind and to the right of me clicked faintly. I looked toward it. It was Room 3. I saw a man standing half hesitantly and watching me. The room behind him was dark. The light overhead was not distinct. I got only a blurred glimpse at his features, but by his eyes I knew that he was suspicious and desperate. He wore an overcoat and a broad felt hat.

I caught the impression of some sort of streak on the side of his face, like a scar.

Perhaps it was a scar, I thought, as almost at once he put his hand to that side of his face, then up-turned his collar. I did not stare at him at all, at least in the sense of staring. I looked and turned away to the notice under the gong. There were also rules, ordinances, laws. Plenty to read.

I kept my back toward him. But my eyes looked as far around their corners as they could. I knew that he had not had a good view of me, for I had put up a hand to scratch the side of my nose as I faced him; and a hand may be as good a mask as a kerchief without inducing the suspicions that follow the wearing of a mask.

He came into the hallway, and walked rapidly right behind me. His coat even brushed against mine. I did not turn my face at all. I knew that he was watching closely, that he would watch just as long as he could see by turning his head toward me. I did not move until I heard his feet far down on the stairs; then swiftly I turned to the door which he had not locked as he came out. The key was inside. I closed the door.

I stood for a moment in the darkness wondering just what the chances might be of his coming back, and I thought perhaps it would not be wisest to turn on the lights. I could see comfortably in the dark and wait for morning. I knew by the room's position that it faced on the street and would be one of the best that the lodging house had to offer. The blinds were down. The room was very dark, musty, close.

I walked with hands out, gropingly, as a blind man walks, toward the windows to raise one of them and have some air. I did not want to turn on the lights. It was possible that the man might be watching from the street. One can never tell what some one else may do. And I am cautious. So I walked with hands outstretched and put my feet down carefully in short steps.

Then—well, my blood does not run cold in moments of sudden fright. I don't have moments of fright, anyway. I sometimes have a prickly sensation around the spine; and as I stepped back, jerking myself backward, I may have had a sharp intake of breath, for I knew by the feel of it that I had stepped on human flesh.

I stood motionless, breathing slowly, waiting some seconds for all my nerves to get back into a quiet state. I probably wouldn't have done more than flicker an eyelid, if that, had some one spoken to me through the darkness in the room.

But somehow I knew this body was dead. And to touch the dead unexpectedly gives even me the sensation of rudely breaking in upon solemn and forbidden mystery. What the dead know, living men may never learn, therefore humility becomes us in their presence.

I felt about in the many pockets I had around me and got a match.

I stooped and struck it. The burst of light in eyes accustomed to darkness was at first blinding. I bent lower, and as the small flame danced flickeringly along the splinter of wood, I saw a woman at my feet. She lay twisted on her back, face up. Jewels gleamed at the throat under the torn waist collar. A blot of bluish black on the edge of her forehead told the story. A blow had done it. Hers was a face I had never seen before.

I stared down at her until the match flame stung my fingers; then I lighted another match to guide me to the light button, and turned on the light. The man I had seen leaving would not wish to come back.

V

I HAVE told how I got to the room; so whoever wishes can judge for himself and however he pleases as to whether it was just some haphazard chance or by the darkly written word of Fate that I should come stumbling in upon the warm body of a woman murdered in the very act of writing my name.

The room—a front room—was shabby. It had even little of the frayed elegance which landladies usually give to their best quarters. The carpet was a bleached Brussels thing; in spots worn through to the floor. The nap was gone. The furniture was a bed, a straight chair, an armed rocking-chair, a square-topped table, a pine dresser with a warped mirror. On the wall was a last year's calendar and a photogravure picture of a movie actress cut from a newspaper supplement. The walls were studded with white specks where tacks had been driven through the dull green paper into the plaster. Something remotely like lace curtains were at the windows, and they were full of dust. It came almost stranglingly flying out when I brushed against the curtains to open a window. There was much need for air.

In the room also was a new traveling satchel, and the only thing in the satchel was a revolver with two emptied shells. By the strength of the odor I guessed they had been fired not long before.

It was a shabby room. The woman's

skirt and jacket were of a cheap sloppy kind. But her waist was silken. A string of jewels were about her neck. I opened her handbag. It was filled with bills, and many rings. Nothing else at all to give a clue as to who she was or why she was there. In the register her name was Mrs. Ann Adair, Room 3.

I looked about. The straight-backed chair was drawn up to the square-topped table. On the table was a new tablet. One of the kind to be had almost any place for fifteen cents. With ruled lines across the sheets. By the tablet was a crudely sharpened new pencil. I opened the tablet. The sheet was blank, but faint lines showed the impression of what had been written. Close examination showed that several sheets had been torn out.

I tried to read the faint tracings on the sheet but nothing was to be made of it until I had scraped dust from the lead onto the paper and smeared it with my finger. The writing came out as if by magic. The page was numbered "8." She had written a long letter—or whatever it was she wrote—and had broken off abruptly. It ran:

—taking an awful chance in sending this to you, but that devil has played me false and I always told him he would regret it if he did. He doesn't care anything about you and your men. The only person alive that he's afraid of is the one he tried to frame as I told you, and when he found you had the wrong man he was almost crazy. The reason he's afraid of Everhard——

Then only the barren blank space of an unfinished page.

Death, violent death, was touching rapidly one after another those who could have told me what I wanted to know.

Harrow, the Russian chauffeur, was dead. A woman was supposed to have killed him, according to the newspapers. At least somebody saw him talking with a woman near the lodging entrance where he was killed. But she had disappeared.

In the revolver were two empty shells.

Now this woman, nearing the end of a confession meant apparently for the chief of police, was suddenly dead. Perhaps *he*, whoever the fellow was, had been intent on putting all witnesses out of the way; and by accident had come in upon her just in time to catch from her tablet good reason for his crime. And his coat had brushed mine in passing.

I always regret it when I fail to do the things I feel like doing: at the time I wanted to wheel, put a gun against his belly and ask him what was the matter? And always I had boasted to myself that I seldom failed to place a face. This fellow's face was as strange to me as a painted visage from Japan. We must have met before, face to face. He had fear of me and hate. Neither is an impersonal emotion. Yet I would have sworn from a witness stand that he was a stranger. A scarred face, too; and I couldn't place him.

I sat down in the rocker and in the gloomy glow of the electric bulb kept vigil beside the dead woman, and waited for the morning.

A beautiful woman, I have no doubt many people of taste in such values as beauty would have said. Near thirty, perhaps, or around there. Courage on her face—or stubbornness? At heart no doubt like all women; or all that I had known. Women were not favorites with me. There had never been but one favorite. I married her. Wilful, tempestuous, furious, in many ways lovely—but too much the wayward child to be happy, or to let any one else be happy. She had gone her own way and wondered, I believe, a little disappointedly why I had not followed after and killed her. And the man too. This poor dead woman on the carpet before me—her penciled wail was that the man had played her false.

So it is that Life strikes right and left. The balance must be kept, in all things. When a child is born a grandsire dies to make room for it in the crowded world. Night chases the sun around the world. Antagonisms are handcuffed together. One sex is as bad as the other. Individuals are nothing; the balance is everything; so when a woman lies to the foolish man that loves her, somewhere at the other end of the city some man is swearing mightily by an honor that he never had and the woman believes. Life doesn't care who is who. Her accounts must balance.

Moodily feeling much that way about it, I had a sad kinship with the woman who lay twisted and chilled on the carpet worn to the boards by the shuffling feet of an army of transients. Her quest had been revengeful, and the blot of broken bone and bruised skin on her forehead was like some great sinister seal to the mandate forbidding her. My name was the last word on her tablet. Certainly Life had linked us in some mysteriously tragic way.

So it was the night dragged its weary length across the city and I kept my silent vigil by the side of a nameless woman.

VI

ALMOST of the next day I stayed in a hotel room and read the papers. They seemed to regard a bewildering splatter of conflicting facts and evidence as news. They said the police were bending every effort to get me so that the mystery might be cleared. Had I believed their getting me would have done that, I am not sure I would not have telephoned again to headquarters.

Already I had telephoned, giving the number of the room and the name of the lodging house where the dead woman was.

All day the papers screamed in frantic type. It would be both tedious and confusing to try to repeat what they said. The important thing was that they knew nothing. They made a great fuss about my having gone to the police station and communicated with Lord Bob under the nose of the turnkey; and the chase that followed, with an account of the search.

The mystery of the dead woman puzzled too. I had left the page smeared with lead dust. The police read and did not understand; but couldn't quite connect me up with that crime. However, they took finger-prints all about the room and were said to have got excellent impressions from the collar around the dead woman's throat.

One thing appearing of extreme interest to me was the reproduced photograph of Victor Buccleaugh. It was not possible to tell much of what he looked like because of the beard. A man that wears a beard does so for the reason of vanity or else to conceal something. Buccleaugh's face was bearded, thickly bearded, but trimmed to a point. It was in a way a handsome face. But I could not place it. In so far as I knew I had never seen it. Yet I was accused of having most terribly murdered and mutilated him. And every time I began to tingle with resentment at being suspected of such a ferocious outrage, I grew calmly cold from the remembrance that Lord Bob believed I was guilty.

All day I read the papers and meditated broodingly how I could possibly establish one point of contact with the mystery that had me encircled completely as the ocean has a man on a raft.

Burdeaux—a detective, a European detective—had appeared and told much about Buccleaugh.

This detective seemed a modest sort of fellow. At least the reporters got that impression and passed it on. His name was Burdeaux, Jean Paul Burdeaux of Paris. There was no doubt as to his credentials. With a certain French gesticulation of shoulder he had regretted Buccleaugh's fate, saying:

"In another ten hours I would have had him. Ah! A wonderful man, that Buccleaugh. No, not French. English. Of an old English family. He was a great rascal, a very great rascal. He has not been in this United States much. No. He came to California because he was not known. He settled down as a banker that is through work. Ah—we regret to disturb any gentleman, but it was too much to let him have peace. He had a million in gems, and they are gone! This Everhard—it is terrible."

The story Burdeaux told was, briefly, this: Buccleaugh and confederates had got hold in Paris of a great quantity of jewels, formerly owned by the Czar. Buccleaugh came to New York with the jewels to dispose of them profitably. So much the artist as he was, there was no difficulty about smuggling them in. His confederates came, too—only to find that Buccleaugh had disappeared, leaving them to hold the sack. They swore terrible vengeance—and Buccleaugh's body had been found in the park garbage dump, chopped, seared, brutally mutilated.

Everhard, said Burdeaux, may have had close relations with the confederates of Buccleaugh.

Nobody was going to suggest that possibly I was not implicated. And Lord Bob believed I was guilty. I could not forget that. Nor forget the faith I had in Lord Bob's swift insight and shrewd balanced judgment.

Everybody had sympathy with Buccleaugh's young, pretty, deeply saddened widow. She said that she knew nothing, either about the jewels Buccleaugh had had stolen nor about her husband's fear of myself. She offered the police what assistance they suggested, permitted a search of the large house, answered all questions. The police believed her innocent of knowledge about Buccleaugh's crookedness.

All day I read newspapers, one edition

after another as fast as they came from the press. And along about five o'clock I got a little news. Robert Calversley had been released.

The police said they had nothing to connect him up with the crime. True, papers belonging to Buccleaugh had been found in his room; but it was now known that I had access to the room. Possibly I had put them there. Also Harrow had identified him positively as the man Buccleaugh went with in the auto; but Harrow, as so many witnesses are, may have been too agitated to know what he was saying when he identified Calversley. So Lord Bob was turned loose.

And I said to myself:

"Ah, the police of this city are good poker players. They have wise heads as well as large hands and feet. They have every reason in the world that a policeman needs for holding Lord Bob; but they think if I ran such risks to say a word to him in jail I will not wait long before meeting him if he is turned loose. Therefore, watch Lord Bob —and catch Don Everhard."

Rather brilliant logic, for a policeman.

The worst of it was that there was much truth in the logic. Above anything else I could think of to do, I wanted to reach Lord Bob. But knowing something of the way of the police I knew that the telephone operators had instructions to listen in on every call that came to his apartment. I knew a watch would be made for every messenger. Not even his mail would be secure from inspection.

I felt that I had to find out why he, who knew me better than almost any one else knew me, would believe that I would be guilty of such a hot-blooded senselessly savage crime. Not he, nor any other man, had ever seen me in a flare of anger, or when I was not cool headed, even cold. I had to talk with him.

But I didn't. I spent a dozen nickels going around from booth to booth, telephoning the Mono-Mono, saying to the operator there that I was a *'Zaminer* or *Times* reporter, and would she hook me up with Calversley. She said he was not in. I wasn't the only one, she said, trying to get him.

Nothing happened that night. Being without baggage, I changed my hotel again and took another name, registered as from another beach town. Perhaps I am excessively cautious, but the fellow that never stumbles seldom falls.

I slept a few hours that night because I had convinced myself of the utter uselessness of staying awake and thinking. I never dream. I awakened early and telephoned down for the morning papers.

Calversley Dying

That was the first thing I read.

Lord Bob had been found unconscious, badly beaten and stabbed, about 1 A.M. on the lawn of a Pasadena home a half block above the Buccleaugh residence. A night-watchman had heard his groans. At the Emergency Hospital he became conscious for a few minutes but said he did not know who had assaulted him and would not state what he had been doing in Pasadena.

Mrs. Buccleaugh said that he had telephoned in the evening asking to be allowed to see her. She had not talked with him. The maid took the message. Mrs. Buccleaugh refused positively. She would see no one. She had seen no one.

And I said to myself:

"I see. The first thing that Lord Bob does when he is turned out of jail is to make a break for Mrs. Buccleaugh. She came to the jail. He saw her there. They did not speak. Lord Bob believes that I dragged her husband off to some dark spot, chopped him to pieces and tried to burn him in a garbage dump. Mrs. Buccleaugh may be pretty, as all the papers, with consoling solicitation, say every time her name is mentioned, 'the pretty young widow'—she may be pretty, and no doubt is, but I am beginning to be suspicious of her innocence."

Pretty women are never innocent. Is absinth without a sting, ever? Or wormwood without bitterness? Never. So with women of beauty. But as well blame a serpent for its poisoned teeth as a woman for the evilness that is in her.

THAT day I went to Pasadena and in a taxi rode down Orange Grove Avenue. I rode back. Then I walked down the street, and back again. With due discretion I got as much of the lay of the land as one can in a sort of bird's-eye flight.

That night I lay under a short, close-cropped hedge for two hours or more before

I began to crawl closer and closer to the house, moving up along the hedge.

I watched to see what might be seen. There was not much movement in and none about the house. Here and there lights flashed against the drawn blinds, burned a while, went out, and the windows stared out at me like great sightless eyes.

The house, not a large one as houses on the avenue were built, sat back almost a hundred yards from the street with a smooth green level lawn spread before it. The lawn was as evenly trimmed as a carpet's surface is woven, and evenly green as if dipped in a vat. The extreme care and perfectness gave the grounds an artificiality that defeated the sense of beauty. Wonder was evoked for a moment, as always by pleasing novelty; then began the stirrings of irritation as whenever Nature is fastidiously cropped and trimmed, corseted, put into a rigid pattern. One of the stupidities of wealth pops up in the making of lawns to look like blots of green paint, carefully blocked out and evenly smeared.

There are various ways of getting into every house. The science of burglary has advanced to where almost any well-trained prowler can snap his finger at a lock and it opens like the Robbers' Cave to "Sesame." But I am not skilled in the least practise of the dark science.

I meant to watch carefully. If I saw no reason to the contrary in the shape of watchmen moving about, I meant to go up the walk to the front door. Some one would come. If I talked convincingly he would believe I was a police detective who had been watching the grounds, and that I had seen something a little suspicious that I wanted to talk over with somebody in the house.

If I talked convincingly, he would open the door wide enough for me to enter, and a gun barrel is passport through any entrance. There was no particular risk about it. As any one knows who has observed how things happen, boldness is in itself a precaution. I am very cautious, even a little timid perhaps at times; but when I have decided, I do not hesitate.

I retreated to the sidewalk, and making sure no one was in sight, arose. I brushed my clothes a little, then briskly went up the walk to the house. I struck the knocker three or four quick blows, put the tips of my fingers into my side coat pockets and waited.

I was not impatient. I waited. Presently I saw a light burst within, and through the thick film of tapestry before the door glass I made out the silhouette of a moving form. Some one came to the door, paused. A light went on right above my head, and I saw sharp eyes peering intently through the door's curtains that were held slightly aside.

The door swung wide. The frail man in frogged pajama-like garments bowed low, very low, with long-drawn humility. The welcome was so evident, so complete, that I perhaps should have had some doubt about entering. He knew who I was. No door would have opened so to a stranger. He stood with hands across his stomach, bowing so low that I could not see his face.

With a glance to right and left, just to make sure I was not being outflanked, I came in. As I gave the door a push that closed it behind me, I said—

"Stand up."

His empty hands went out before him as if offering something to me; and he straightened slowly, lifting his face last. The slender hands of yellowish ivory fell with a movement of grace to his side.

I knew the old Chinaman, an old mute. He had had my life a dozen times in his hands for I trusted him as much as any man. It wasn't that alone—just seeing him, that gave a blow to every nerve I had. At the sight of his face, the mystery was unmasked. For one of the very, very few times in my life I did not know whether to turn back or to go on. I paused a second or two.

There was the stillness of a robbed tomb, a sense of great emptiness too in the wide, deep, hall-like room. Fate had spoken again with noiseless lips. There was much about the black-twisted tragedy that I did not understand; but I did not think of that part. There was so much else, clear as the landscape over which lightning plays, that for a moment there seemed no longer to be a mystery.

I looked at Yang and for a time that was all. I just looked at him, and his answering gaze came from eyes inscrutably black. There is no emotion in me, so I have none to show. As nearly as I can express it, a sense of rigidity seemed to cover me, locking every muscle fast so that it did not move. Whoever lives as a gambler must, lives behind a mask. He wins, not by the cards that fall to him but by letting no

quiver or glance show if the hand be good or bad, by giving no sign that lets those who watch him know if he will strike hard—or go into the discards. And in what way is the game of life different from the fall of cards?

The silence in the house was the silence of an empty place. The voiceless old Chinaman did not move a lash, but upstaring, waited as if cut from aged ivory by one of the Far East's cunning workmen.

With quiet evenness I asked—

"Where is she?"

His eyes went toward the distant stairway and upward, then the gaze, dark and veiled, came back to my face.

"Go to her. Say that I am here."

He bowed low and long. Always his respect toward me had shown an air of exaggeration, or it irritatedly seemed so anyhow. He straightened up. With the sort of unexpected swiftness that stage magicians have, a pencil and small pad appeared in his hands; but he wrote with slow care, then with hand held out almost ceremoniously offered me:

"You are waited. Been long time now."

When he saw that I had read, he put out his arm toward the stairs, gesturing that I go at once—that I was expected—that I had been expected for a long time—that I was being awaited.

I looked at Yang very hard. Again there was silence; and we were motionless.

One of the fortunate things about this world is that there is a reason for everything that happens in it. There is as much logic in lunacy as in calculus. Nothing happens from an unrelated tangent. The devil and his black magic may have power, but he can't spin his mischief out of thin air. He can't run so fast that he doesn't leave cloven footprints behind him. So I knew there was no magic abroad that night. Yang would not lie to me.

With a twisted idea of showing gratitude he had a few years before taken some kind of a mystic Oriental oath that gave his life to me to do with as I pleased. And I had used it. I had said, "Go," and he had gone where I told him. So I knew that when he said I was expected, and awaited that night, that it was true. There is a reason, always, for whatever is true. For whatever is false, too.

But no one could have known that I was coming. At least not without the devil's help. I haven't any faith in the devil and he never interferes in the affairs of those who do not believe in him. He goes to ouija boards, gossips with spiritualists, whispers at the ears of psychiatrists, talks with the tongue of fortune-tellers; none of which things have a straw's weight with me. Be sure of it, wherever there is magic there are hidden wires; and the gift of prophecy has ever been refuted by the poverty of the prophet. Yet in this house of Buccleaugh's I was awaited, expected.

"All right. I will follow you."

Yang bowed, turned and with the noiseless shuffle of padded slippers moved over the shimmeringly waxed floor.

I looked up toward the top of the stairs too late to see more than a vanishing flutter of an indistinct object. Some one had been watching.

VII

THE wide doorway was curtained with fold on fold of thick black velvet, hanging with motionless ripple in the dim light.

Yang stopped and stepped aside. When I looked around he was gone.

Then the curtains slowly parted. A young pretty Chinese girl held them back. She smiled slightly, half friendly, timid. In soft bird-like tones she asked would I not enter?

I went in.

There was not much surprize for me in the stagey effect of noiseless Orientals moving through black curtains. Ceremonious luxury, theatrical routine, were a part of the very life and being of the woman within the room. I knew her. I mean that I knew more than the spelling of her name and curve of her features. I knew her restless, half-tragic, irresponsible, brilliant-winged whimsy, her flashing moods; and I knew the danger that was in her.

I faced toward the low dais where she sat in a chair with a high back that flared out like a fan studded with jewels.

Luxury, or rather extravagance, was all about. It filled the house, the room; it had poured itself upon her. I understood why Buccleaugh had risked their vengeance to steal the spoils from his fellow thieves. Since Eden was thrown away for an apple and fig leaf, good men, bad men, weak men, strong men, wise men too, right on down the spinning centuries to the latest clock

tick have tossed away their fortunes to feed and clothe the woman.

The curtains closed with a soft fall like the flow of sluggish water, and we were alone. The room, lighted with a vague diffused glow from no visible lamps, was hung with velvet. What windows it may have had were blotted out by the thick arras-like hangings on the walls. They were of black velvet. A scattering of rhinestones, some clustered, some sprinkled, glimmered and gleamed on the surface like diamonds on the breast of Death.

She sat motionless with eyes half closed, hands extended and resting on the arms of the chair. Out of all the poses she had studied for the occasion, she had selected this one. As ever, her dramatic taste was good. The pose was regally effective, her beauty great. She was a beautiful, daring, reckless, generous and heartless woman; intense, changeable, dangerous.

She claimed, but how honestly I can't say, that a part of her blood came down from a Tatar princess. I know nothing of Tatar royalty. From all the pictures I have seen, the Tatars seemed a disreputable lot of shabbily dressed savages. She was prouder of that wild blood than of the more immediate ancestry which had given her a rounded delicacy of body, the slim beautiful hands and feet, the face refined and bold with long black lashes over tawny irises. Her hair was black, silken and thick enough to give the warmth of a cape. Now it was coiled in a severely plain serpentine twist about her head, and the coils were studded with bright crimson jewels—maybe glass.

At first glance her face was not pretty—but ever afterward it was. The outline was uneven, and, as if the Tatar blood were showing, the cheek bones were high. Her complexion too had a faint trace of sun and wind ancestry, with the richness of burnished gold. She was not, as I have said, "pretty." No artist would have taken her for a candy company's calendar; but Hovsep Pushman, who, more than any living man who handles paint, brings out the sheer dramatic quality of character, named her portrait, "Daughter of the Sphinx."

She wore a gown of silken black. From high collar to waist, was tight-fitting, unbroken black, except for a splotch of jeweled red on the breast, over the heart.

To the right of her chair was a slender pedestal; and on it was an open, richly ornate case in which a dagger lay, and by the case stood a small bottle cut from crystal. In front and to the left of the dais was a padded stool.

I looked at her for a long time, waiting, watching closely.

I know, for I knew *her*, that she had some disappointment in that I did not show surprize or even much interest in the trappings. What I felt was too far down inside of me to get to my face. I watched her face. She never seemed more than then a Daughter of the Sphinx, woman enigmatic, dark, passionate, dedicated to some mystic impulse of her sex.

With a slow movement of a slightly raised hand she indicated the stool and said—

"Won't you sit down, please?"

Her voice was low and even, strained but controlled. Like all women, a thorough actress; like most of them, sincere in every rôle, however swiftly dual and at variance. She had as many moods as a harp has strings, and wind-blown fancies played on them all. This was the night of tragic feeling and she had great fear and much cause for it. She was my wife.

She repeated—"Won't you sit?"

I shook my head.

"Is there any reason why you should be ungracious just because you have come—have come——"

Her voice had a slightly imperious irritation though she broke off, afraid her tone would fail.

"You knew I would come?"

"Yes. I knew."

"Why?"

"I have always known there was a tiger behind that cold manner of yours."

I shook my head slightly, and said:

"That doesn't answer. How—why did you think I would come, here?"

She watched me intently. Her fingers closed grippingly on the arm of the chair and her red lips were pressed hard together for a moment. Her emotion was about to get away from her.

Then, with angry petulance, she demanded:

"Do you still think me a child? When I saw you were not in the jail, I knew you would come here—*next*."

"I see. You think it takes a lot of blood to satisfy a tiger. Is that it?"

She exclaimed tensely, rapidly:

"Don't play with me, or try to play with me. I would not show you I was afraid. Here—" her hands swept out "—you see, I have prepared a death chamber. And I waited for you to come. I am ready!"

"Why wait for me?"

"It is your right. I would not cheat you of your right."

"You mean," I said, "that you thought my mercy would be touched when we were together."

"I will *not* have mercy!"

"I don't blame you. After the labor of such trappings, mercy'd spoil the tragic effect. But if it was merely death you wanted, why not touch your wrist with a dagger's point and go to sleep? And *who* was it cut into Lord Bob last night? Did you put that Chinaman on to him?"

She turned her face away uninterestedly, answering:

"I did not. I would not see him. That is all I know. If anything, I am grateful because he did not say anything when he recognized me—at the jail. But he had no right to want to see me here." Her face flashed around. "Besides, I knew that you would come. Not a door in this house is locked. Not a window. You never stop halfway. That is the tiger in you, but I never thought—" She shuddered as she broke off, and tensely turned her face away as if averting it from the garbage dump where more than tigerish cruelty had shown itself.

"You loved him a great deal?" I asked.

She answered angrily:

"I hated him—*hated* him until the way you did that dreadful thing. I told him. I always told him from the very first that you would kill him, and me too. He believed it. He was afraid, and—" spiritedly —"he was no coward. But that cold patient way of yours, like you are now, just standing there—waiting, staring, planning. It drove me crazy just to be around you. You can't do anything more than kill me anyway. I want you to know the truth. It wasn't Buccleaugh— It was just anybody to get away from *you*. I couldn't stand it. You are a brute. I always knew you were a brute. But you have the right to kill me, and I wouldn't run. I wouldn't run from any man. I kept Yang with me just so you could always find out where we were and come and kill me when you got ready! That's the contempt I have for you and your vengeance!"

I looked at her scrutinizingly and wondered: Is she merely hysterical or really out of her head? Or is what she says the truth? Or is this seeming defiance stage play to please her own sense of the dramatic? Or does she think this half-mad racket a way to inveigle my sympathy? It was more than I could answer.

I said coldly:

"With unerring precision you have guessed wrong. Once or twice a month I may have thought of you. Sometimes not so often, Mrs. Buccleaugh. Yang—I sent him to serve you, not me, Mrs. Buccleaugh."

"Don't call me that. It is *not* my name. You know it is not my name."

I questioned her with raised eyebrows and no words.

"I had to use it, of course," she said defensively. "But—well—I never liked it. It wasn't his name anyway."

"No?"

She regarded me with a queer expression and said—

"When I am dead you will learn who he was."

I did not answer. I had no interest.

She spoke with a furious tensity:

"I could forgive you everything, but the ghastly awful way—the—oh, it is horrible!"

"Pardon me, but I am not at all interested in your forgiveness, Mrs.—ah—Richmond."

She sat up with a start, her eyes opening wide in real horror.

"You monster! You cold-blooded monster! Oh, I hate you. I've always hated you. I never knew why, but it was because I knew intuitively that you were a monster, capable of the most horrible things! And to think I felt you had the right to *punish* me. That I waited for you to come and kill me! Oh—I— Don't you dare lay hands on me, not even to kill me!"

I struck palm to palm with a startling sharp smack, and said:

"Stop that nonsense. I had no more to do with Buccleaugh's death than I had to do with the death of Moses. And I came here to see his wife—not mine!"

She sank back, breathless; for a moment unaffected, forgetting to pose, staring, incredulous, as when black is no longer black—but is found to have been white all the time.

"Don!"

She knew that whatever I said was true; and what I said had in a way brought all of her stage scenery down about her ears, knocked the legs from under her chair. Whether this was with relief or disappointment to her I wouldn't have ventured to say. But that is a bit unjust. Her face that had been strained and a little pale suddenly glowed feverishly. She leaned forward, excited, amazed:

"Don! You—you—you didn't?"

I didn't answer because I don't have to affirm the things I say. People who know me know that. Besides she was not asking me a question. She was merely underscoring for her own ears what I had said.

"Then who—Don, who *could* have done it?"

"That French detective mentioned certain friends of his—certain business friends, I believe." My tone was not pleasant.

"Oh?" She was a little confused; did not know what to think; or rather her thoughts were in such a whir that nothing was clear. But she asked with a flash of bluntness—

"Those crooks—you think they did it?"

"No," I said. "I do not think those crooks did it. I would go so far as to say I know they did not do it. That's a guess, but without much chance of being wrong."

"Oh—then who——"

"That's one of the things I had hoped to learn, tonight. When crooks punish a traitor they want his name and manner of death to be known. They don't take all the trouble that was taken with Buccleaugh to hide his identity. And the story of losing all those jewels is unconvincing. Robbers would have ducked—not hauled a corpse around town, mutilating it, looking for a place to hide it." Then I asked—"Did you ever see a man with a scar on his jaw?"

She slowly shook her head.

"Do you know of any woman with the initials of A. A.?"

Vivian's face flushed hotly. I could almost hear her teeth click as she set her jaws.

"What was her name?"

She snapped—

"Ann Adair."

"And why do you happen to—ah—have a distaste for the name?"

"She made trouble. Or tried to. She said that I—*I*—was nothing but a doll, full of sawdust or stuff as lifeless! Said that of *me*! Oh, I just ignored her remarks."

"She was your rival?" I asked.

"No!"

"I see. She just tried to be."

Vivian was angered and baffled.

"Why do you talk to me like that? What does all this mean? Did she do it? She threatened him—I know she threatened him if he did not leave me."

"She loved him?"

"She wanted his money"—contemptuously.

I said—

"Ah, so she *was* your rival then!"

She took it with an amazed, angered "Oh!" and with something so unpremeditatedly reproachful in her voice that almost I wished I had not said it in just that way.

"That Russian chauffeur—Harrow? Do you know anything of him?"

She shook her head.

"Are you sure," I asked, "that you never saw or heard of a man with a scar on his jaw?"

She looked at me in such a queer way that I believed she would not answer straight; and she did answer with an evasive sort of question—

"You asked that before. What do you mean? What kind of scar?"

"Such a one as a man might get from leaning his cheek against a passing bullet. Or having his jaw raked by a knife. Is there such difference in scars that you need know the instrument that made it to tell the truth? It was the man with the scar that killed your husband."

Angrily, raising a hand as if to strike:

"He was not my husband! You—you—Oh, I hate you!"

She was standing, and on the dais with the long train of black draped with a stately, half-winding arrangement, the appearance of her height was increased. She stared down at me with furious eyes, and was no doubt the more angered by knowing from many flares and tantrums that nothing she could say or do would get me excited.

"Who," I demanded, without courtesy of tone at all, "is the man with the scar?"

"Yes, who? As if you don't know. I think you lied when you said you didn't kill Buccleaugh! You knew that he was—" She stopped short, watching my face, trying to read what I might think. There was nothing to read. After a moment she said, "Did you ever hear of a man named Martin Martineaux?"

I did not say either yes or no, not even by the slightest movement of head or muscle. She knew I had more than heard of him. It was evident by the way she asked it, as if the question had sprung a trap from which there was no escape for me. There was no trap about it, however. Everybody eight or ten years before heard of him. That is, everybody in California.

MARTIN MARTINEAUX was wanted dead or alive, with a thousand dollars on his head. He had been a high-class crook, but with a vicious record behind him, which high-class crooks seldom have. I had seen him but a few times. Then he wore dark glasses. He was a fashionable man about town, engaged to a society girl; and he played a little poker for the sport of it. I happened to be in the game too—playing for a livelihood. He was clever at cards, but quite unexpectedly my hand closed on his wrist, raising his arm above his head.

The amazed young sports about the table not only found seven cards in his hand, but a hold-out contrivance up his sleeve. Martin Martineaux was booted from the room, as any man deserved to be if his work is raw. Besides, even I played fair with the boys that used that club room. Perhaps because there was no need to play otherwise. Judge me as you please and believe if you wish that I cheated friends at play.

Anyway, Martineaux went about swearing vengeance on me and may have succeeded in making some people believe that I thrust the two extra cards into his hand. How he explained, or tried to explain the hold-out, I don't know. He did not bother me, but engaged himself in enough trouble otherwise. The gambling incident attracted attention to him. He was wanted in the East for murdering his wife.

Two officers went to arrest him. He killed them and got away. San Francisco was furiously excited, but he got away. His criminal record, or a big part of it, came to light, and showed that he was as audacious as vicious, a brilliant crook, an artist at playing himself off as a gentleman; but with no more regard for human life than for a litter of kittens. A thousand dollars was put on his head—and nothing more was heard of him.

"Martineaux—you do remember him?"

Martineaux may have thought that the gambling episode which precipitated his bad luck warranted his everlasting hate for me, and this may have caused him to try to frame me as Buccleaugh's murder. It is surprizing what ideas will stick in the half-cracked heads of crooks. Years later for reasons that every one but themselves have forgotten they tried to kill somebody by way of revenge.

It might be Martineaux had planned to fasten the crime on me, having cause to put Buccleaugh out of the way he might have gone a step farther and made me out as the murderer to even up an old grudge. It was wise of him to try to get his revenge at long range, for if he came close to me he would get shot. I most certainly would have claimed the reward too, and passed it on to the widows of the dead officers.

"Martineaux had a scar right there." She drew a finger along her cheek and watched me in such a queer way that I was sure something else of importance was coming; and it did. "But"—there was a kind of hazy triumphant air about her, though why it should have been I don't know—"but, unless Buccleaugh committed suicide the man with the scar didn't kill him!" She paused a moment, then clinched her triumph with, "Buccleaugh was Martineaux!"

"He wouldn't have dared come back," I said. I did not really doubt. I knew the man would dare anything. But a little doubt stirs up a woman's tongue.

"I know it is so," she cried.

"You knew it was so? Often you were ashamed of my name and reputation. May I congratulate you on——"

"Don't you say it! Don't you dare say it! Oh I could kill you!" Her words were more savage than her tone. "You think *that* of me? I did not know. Honest I did not know. Oh, it was terrible of me, but even when I did not know he was Martineaux I hoped that you would kill him. Oh, and I did so hope you *had* killed him! What I went through with that man—I was afraid every day that he would kill me. That's why I *couldn't* leave him. He would have killed me. And, you won't believe me—but, honest Don, when I thought you would come and kill me—I—I almost wanted it—to die that way. You don't, you won't believe me, but it is true. See—I put a dagger there. In this bottle poison,

ready for you to make me take it. But you don't love—I mean you don't *hate* me enough to care!"

Her voice had the ring of passionate disappointment.

I have put down what she said. What she meant, I do not know. Nothing, perhaps. It would be only like a woman to have meant nothing. The love of acting makes the woman play her part dramatically. Her sincerity is in the rôle, not in the emotion; and scenery makes the mood.

"No," I said coldly, taking care that the tone should be impersonally cold, "I don't hate you enough to care."

"But Don—once, once you *did* love me—once!"

As pointedly as I could I ignored the statement.

"About Martineaux. How do you know?"

Her face was flushed. Her manner eager. She half turned and jerked from the chair a folded paper, and, opening it carefully, held it up for me to read:

DEAD OR ALIVE
$1,000 Reward

That was the way it began. It was one of the ten-year old bills that had been posted against Martineaux; and a picture was in the middle. There was a scar right along the cheek; but Martineaux had no such scar on him at the time we met. I bent closer; then it was easily seen that the scar was only a pencil mark, carefully placed.

"You did it," I said to her, pointing.

"No, I did not. It was there. I found this in his papers before the police came. It was a terrible shock to me, for you can see, Don, that this picture *is* Buccleaugh's. His scar—that's why he wore a beard—so nobody would recognize him. But I knew just as soon as I found this. The pencil mark—maybe he put there, just—you know—as a man sometimes will do queer things. He had a scar. Right there."

I could not from the picture clearly recognize any resemblance between Martineaux and Buccleaugh, for Buccleaugh had been wholly unknown to me, and Martineaux's features forgotten in the ten busy years. I looked hard at the picture and tried to see if there was anything in it that resembled the man I had with no certainty at all caught sight of coming out of the room where Ann Adair lay dead. I could not be sure one way or the other.

She was saying:

"—this picture, it is his. Buccleaugh's. I would have known it any place."

I had taken the reward poster from her. I folded and put it into my pocket.

"What are you doing?" she demanded feverishly, but not reproachfully. "If you let anybody know Buccleaugh was Martineaux, they can't punish the men that killed him— They can even claim the reward! Dead or alive, it says!"

I answered:

"Yes. That is what it says. That is just *why* I may need it, very much. I think that before very many hours I shall probably plead guilty to having killed Buccleaugh."

"You did"—she was almost shrieking—"you *did* kill him! You did. I knew you did—that's why I had it here. To give you, Don, I—I wanted to do something for you. I don't suppose you will *ever* forgive me, but Don, the reason I left you was because I loved you! It *is*. I loved you, and it drove me crazy because you didn't seem to care. You are not human—so cold! Always like a mask on your face. I couldn't stand it—I wanted to hurt you, to wake you up, to make you seem human! I didn't care what I did. I hoped you would kill me—I did—if I could only once see you in a passion, mad with jealousy—if I could feel that you really did love me as a man ought to love—Don, I would die happy right under your hand!"

She had stepped from the dais. She was close to me. Her hands were almost extended. She was imploring, her face pleading in expression, and she waited with saddened hope in her eyes. And what could I say?

The wiles and spidery arts of woman can be defeated only with deafened ears and blinded eyes. Beauty had touched her with a radiant glow. Feverishness, no doubt. Her voice, even after the sound had died, echoed with a shell-like music in the inner chambers of the brain. She waited, pleadingly eager.

I looked at her steadily, smiled a little or tried to, and barely shook my head. There was nothing to be said.

She walked stumblingly backward, her arms outreaching behind her, and slumped with quivering, chill-like nervousness into the chair and kept her face down.

"——, how you—how you have humbled me!"

I told her, not bitterly and certainly with no kindliness, however, that like all pretty women she thought she carried a pardon in her face; that, after all, the fault was not entirely hers because every man who saw her, and other pretty women as well, pretended it was a privilege to dance to the snapping of their gem-studded fingers.

Even she who had known me well, and should have known that not what she or what any other person could do would make me lose my head, had fearfully expected that I would "punish" her. It was not so much her conscience, not conscience at all, but the quite general feeling in criminal courts and pulpits that a wife is property; and society has the unexpressed belief that blood will wipe out a stain, as if shame could ever be assoiled by murder.

The frank truth is that men who kill pretty women—ugly ones are discarded, not butchered—who have ceased to love them are nothing at best but dogs in the manger; vicious sort of curs at that. And this husband's honor which the defendant's lawyer—for a fee—talks so feelingly about must be a painfully fragile thing if it is broken and lost by what a woman can do. In a country where a woman's folly will make murder legal it were better to drown all girl babies at their christening, and so escape the inevitable.

"Oh, you are cruel—cruel," she said, looking up with something painfully wistful in her eyes. "Don't treat me this way—as if you didn't care. Oh, say something—*do* something! Strike me—beat me—kill me—or—or Don, kiss me!"

How much of that was art and drama, how little was meant, I do not know. I did not try to keep away the smile. There was no other answer.

"Don't laugh at me! My ——, you make fun of me! Oh—I'll kill——" she snatched at the dagger in the box and raising it, point down, aimed at her breast. "I'll kill myself!"

Any movement I could have made would have been too late; and when a woman is opposed she is determined. Vivian glared at me, a gleaming madness in her eyes, her hands poised a moment with the sharp steel hovering at the jeweled splotch of red that marked her heart. She was not—a woman is never, or at most is hardly ever—so beside herself as to be unaware of the dramatic attitude.

Without stirring a finger, I said—

"All right, I'll watch."

The effect on her was much the same as when the rope on which one pulls with back-bending weight, snaps.

"You think I won't?" she challenged, trying to make her voice ring threateningly, though the mood of a moment before was gone.

I said—

"I am waiting."

She threw the dagger more at me than at my feet where it fell. "That's why I hate you—why I've always hated you! You're a clod, a stick—a—a—you are not a human being. I won't do anything to please you. I never did. I never will. You're a conceited fool. You think yourself so much better than other people that nothing bothers you! Victor Buccleaugh was a gentleman at least—but——"

"You mean Martineaux? Yes. He has killed one wife I believe—as a gentleman of honor should."

"Oh! Out of my sight! My house!" The dismissal in her outflung arm was imperious. She was always dramatic. "I will *not* be insulted. You are a coward. You knew I was here alone. You came just to insult me! You've spied on me. You've hounded me with that old Chinaman. I knew he was your spy. I didn't care. That's how much contempt I have for you!" And so forth.

A woman's angry tongue runs on and on. She did not know what she was saying, and did not care. A hurt woman always spins a false, fast, mocking story—unless she weeps, forgiven, on the man's breast; and then with telling how good she is going to be, and dutiful, she spins a more false story. In them contrition is weariness, the wish for soothing rest; but when rested the full-spirited whimsies, the gay foaming blood, the restlessness of too much peace, again make the whistlings of Folly lure.

I did not say good-by or anything, but turned fumblingly to the black curtains, looking for the doorway.

"Don!" she cried in a new, more insistent, pleading voice.

I did not look around or answer. It is at the parting moment the devil may be heard chuckling if the man turns in his tracks to hear the woman's last word.

I groped through the curtains, knowing just about where to find the doorway; parted them, and as I went out her voice reached me:

"Don't—don't leave me, Don! I—I love you! Oh, you are a monster—Don, please! Listen! ——"

I let the curtains fall behind me. I had not looked around. No one was in sight. Yang afterward said in his queer childish hand that his orders had been to stay clear away, no matter what happened. But I knew the way. I stepped toward the stairs, and down them. The house was silent with the echoing silence of noiseless night hours. Then——

Scream on scream, with rigid convulsive terror—shrill as if struck from some monstrous fiddle by a giant's hand and bow—then silence.

I was near the foot of the stairs, and paused, turned and knowing the cry was full of death's own fear, I went fast, plunging through the black folds of curtain and stood motionless, peering about the solid black walls. Vivian was dead.

There was no sign nor trace of how death had come and gone except that she lay face down, as she had stumblingly fallen in flight, and a knife's handle stood up from her back. It was a large knob-handled knife.

The heavy curtains, with their twinkling rhinestones, hung motionless. There was no ripple or stir in them. The room, with insincere display, had been dedicated to Death; and Death came on fantom feet.

I jerked at the arras hangings to tear them down, to uncover whoever might be hiding behind them; but the fastenings were firm. I could not think that any man dared lurk there, but nothing remained except to see, so I began to draw my hand along the black velvet, pushing it against the wall. Nobody could have remained there undetected.

The wall seemed suddenly to give way. My hand shot out—through an open window. I raised the curtains and looked from the window. It opened on to a trellis work, vine covered. The murderer had gone that way.

VIII

THE next day the papers came onto the street with the hysterical news that the finger prints on the knife and window ledge were the same as those that had been on the throat of Ann Adair.

"What did it mean?" was the question with which reporters tugged at the police.

The amazing answer was that I had killed both women.

M. Burdeaux, with the astuteness that is established by literary tradition in all French detectives, advanced—purely as a hypothesis he modestly said—the guess that an investigation would reveal that I had a deep personal grudge against Buccleaugh; not otherwise, said the Frenchman, would his body have been so savagely abused; and, he said, was it not possible that the dead Mrs. Buccleaugh had at some time figured in my life? If so, would not the whole mystery then be simplified?

The reporters were impressed, amazed when Deputy Sheriff McGrew, who was still having some trouble about getting his prisoner delivered to him, identified her as Vivian Rublee Richmond, my wife.

Burdeaux's brilliant accuracy attracted my attention, forcibly. He was leaving, said the papers, in a day or two for Paris. His search ended with Buccleaugh's death. There was, he was sure, now no chance to recover the gems. His work in America was done. He had failed, he said with what the reporter described as a "fatalistic shrug."

To myself I said:

"It isn't often, Don my friend, that you appeal to a detective for help; but this Burdeaux is such a penetrating fellow, so masterly in his deductions, so miraculously astute, that he is worth calling on. He leaves soon for Paris, and says that he has failed. Um?"

I went into the hotel where M. Burdeaux was staying. I registered as from Long Beach and got a room.

I sat down in the lobby and more or less hid myself behind one edition after another of evening papers. The safest place for concealment is always in plain sight. Almost every one knows this, for Poe made it interestingly clear in "The Purloined Letter."

There I waited and watched while people shifted to and fro, in and out of dining-room, tea-room, grill, loitering aimlessly or fidgeting over delayed appointments, with women clicking past—lean, hungry, young women hurrying to telephone booths; and now and then a fat, slow matron, unhealthily contented. I sat where I could watch the key in the box of room 333, the

same being occupied by M. Burdeaux, of Paris. I pretended to be absorbed in various pages of the papers that were almost continually before my face.

The man who had the chair on my right got up and at once some one got into it. I am beginning to believe that a lifetime's alertness has developed a sensitiveness to the sort of scrutinizing glances that people give me from behind. I know that for no apparent reason I often turn when any one watches me intently; and other people who need to know what goes on behind them have said that they do the same.

I turned my head slowly and looked sidelong into a leathery, lined face from where gray eyes watched me sidelong, too. I dropped the paper onto my lap, covering my empty hand, and said quietly:

"Don't move. I 've been watching for you to come up."

And that was what saved me. It made his surprize greater than mine, which was very great. Tom McGrew, deputy in the sheriff's office at San Francisco, knew me. McGrew was just about as timid and bluffable as a full grown and slightly wounded tiger-cat. But he was not hare-brained. Forty years of crook-catching had made him something of a philosopher.

"Mine's under my coat here," he said easily, friendly, but his gray eyes were drawn to a dime's thickness. "I *thought* it was you. So I took some precautions. It's right here, muzzle on."

I smiled a little and rustled the paper a bit significantly:

"Then neither of us can miss. Besides, you know I would rather be shot than hanged."

"Yes," he said slowly, not unpleasantly at all, fully seeing the ridiculousness of the situation. "Yes, so would I."

So there we sat, side by side, with scores of people all about, tramping and chattering, bustling to appointments; and we spoke quietly. I *had* to bluff. I said:

"After I knew you'd got your eyes on me, of course I couldn't run. That would've raised a hue and cry. I had to sit and wait. I thought you'd come up close."

He cleared his throat and shifted his chew of tobacco:

"You c'n see 'round corners out o' the back o' your head then."

"Yes. I have to be watchful. You did not think, did you, that I would sit here and let you arrest me?"

"I didn't think you saw me, an' I didn't quite think it could be you—'r I'd have been just a wee more careful. The resemblance sort o' interested me. I didn't really think it was you. What are you goin' to do, any how? Y'see, all I got to do is shout. Besides, you're covered."

"All right. I suggest that you shout."

He grinned, nodded slightly.

"There's time. I don't like to be rushed. I got you covered, y'see. My advice is don't move. Anyway, I don't believe you done all they say. But things do look bad."

"Why," I asked, "don't you believe it?"

"A gun-fighter don't use a knife. I said that right along."

"He doesn't, ever?" There was a long splinter-like bit of steel in my pocket, with bright stones in the handle.

"No," said McGrew.

"Has anybody believed your theory?"

"Not many. The chief down here does. Smart feller, the chief. He says his boys ain't scratched the varnish off this case yet. Supposin' you come along an' let me interduce you to 'im?"

"No, not today. I am sure that I would get much attention from the chief—and his boys. I thank you, but—not today."

"You'd better call it quits, Mr. Everhard. I got the drop on you, y'know."

"No, Mr. McGrew. You mean it is the other way around. *I* have the drop. You haven't a gun under your coat. An old-timer like you wouldn't sneak up with a gun under his coat. But *I* have to be ready every minute for anything. That is why—" I rustled the paper again as it lay over my lap.

"What d'you want?" he asked.

"To see your hands. Both of them."

He eyed me for a minute as one player about the green topped table eyes another, then put both hands in sight, saying in a matter of fact way—

"Makes no difference though. You can't get away."

So he had been bluffing too! I had suspected as much, and won out. Then I did have this decided advantage: He believed that I would shoot before I would let myself be arrested.

I told him pleasantly, "It makes this difference: you are going with me, instead of my——"

He shook his head firmly. His lean old jaws were set tight. "I ain't goin' out o' this hotel," he said.

"Indeed you are not!" I told him. "But supposing that I give you my word to have a ten minutes' talk, a frank friendly talk, with no guns in sight—will you go with me?"

"Where?"

"To my room?"

"How about mine?" he countered.

"Up-stairs?"

"Yes."

"Lead the way—if you are willing to call it a truce. At the end of ten minutes, or when you say, we'll come back and resume the same situation, side by side in the lobby. You will take my word for it?"

No man has ever had reason to doubt the good faith of my word. I have often had courtesy from and been trusted by people who had no feeling of risk in accepting my promises. In this world a man's word is all he has that is of real value: it is at the bottom of all other values. Even bankers, I am told, would rather loan on the unsecured note of the man whose good word is unquestioned than mortgage the holdings of ordinary men—who keep promises as long as they are not inconvenient.

I was fortunate in that people who knew me and knew of me believed what I said or at least what I promised. McGrew looked a little doubtful at such an unique promise as I had made, but he probably felt it was wiser to accept it than to sit stubbornly in the hotel lobby; besides, he could not help remembering that people who knew me far better than peace officers ever had a chance to know me believed implicitly anything that I said.

"You will try no tricks?" he asked.

"No."

"All right. I'll try it. Come on then."

He got up slowly, with a keen eye downcast on the newspaper that lay across my lap; but I put my arm behind me, then slipped the hand into a side coat pocket where there was a gun, as I folded the paper. It was just as well, I thought, that he did not know whether or not he had been bluffed.

People were all about. But we had spoken with lowered tones and in the ordinary manner of conversation; and to the mob it is not words but manner that conveys meaning. Pantomime came before language and is even yet better understood.

We went up to his room on the fourth floor. The number, I remember, was 433. All the way I was about two steps behind him; and this was less because I distrusted him than because I did not know whether or not an old scarred officer like himself would consider it courtesy to be trusted familiarly by a fellow he ought to have arrested.

WHEN we were in the room he pulled off his coat and sat astride a chair, folding his arms across the back. I did not sit down at all, but stood near a window and listened.

He began by saying that I ought to face the music, that a lot of people who knew me believed I was innocent, but that I couldn't go on the rest of my life dodging officers, so the best thing to do was to come out and go through with it. No matter what luck I had I was sure to be nailed some time, and as long as I did hide out it was taken as evidence of guilt. His was the usual heart to heart talk that a kindly experienced officer gives to a fellow outside of the law.

He said that he knew I wouldn't let anybody arrest me without making them come through smoke and lead; but the thing for me to do was to give myself up. I could do that with credit.

"Not while I am innocent," I told him; and he looked up at me in a queer half-astonished way.

"What d'you mean? That's a funny thing to say."

"Is it? I think before this case is over that I shall plead guilty—and be adjudged innocent."

"Are you gettin' cracked?" He asked the question as much of himself as of me. Then kindly—"It *has* been —— —her murder, an' all."

"Do you know who Buccleaugh was? No? Remember Martineaux — Martin Martineaux?"

"Martineaux—Martineaux?" he repeated thoughtfully, and as an old-time officer always can do, he rapidly sorted the pigeonholes in his brain and said: "Martineaux—I remember. Wasn't he the fellow—sure he was—killed—" Then as quickly as if reading from an old clipping he told what had happened ten years before at San Francisco.

"Yes. And here is his picture," I said,

and I brought out the reward poster. The picture had been made from a good photograph so that the features were clear.

"Great ——!" he cried, looking up at me, his jaws loosely hinged. "Do you know who—oh, it can't be—but—" staring at the picture again "—by ——, it *is*!"

"Yes," I said, for without hearing a word more I knew exactly who he meant. "That was my guess too."

We talked for many minutes longer than ten; and about every two or three McGrew would prod the cuspidor into a new position with his toe and say—

"Let me see that picture 'gain. That's him, by —— that's him even to the scar, for I'll bet it *is* a scar!"

And when he had finished talking we were more like fellow crooks bringing a job to a final plan than honest officer and just as honest outlaw. McGrew was excited as a boy. He slapped his hands together and prodded the cuspidor.

"Understand now," he said, poking a finger in my face and grinning in an effort to seem less desperate than he was, "if this thing fails, I'm not in it. 'Twould ruin my reputation. I'd get thrown out o' office."

I answered without humor—

"If it fails—I shall be hanged."

IX

AND so that was how it came about that when M. Burdeaux, of Paris, took room-key No. 333 and with a sort of stiff-necked swagger—something seemed to be wrong with his neck that caused him to wear swathings of linen—made his way up stairs, somewhere around midnight, and came into his room, the mystery was ended. He had solved it.

He came into his room whistling a merry little soft tune, pressed the light on, took the key from the door and replaced it inside, closed the door, locked it—then, straightening up, turned and looked at me.

As I made no move, and as I said nothing, he put his hands to his eyes, rubbing at them; but I did not vanish.

"Name of ——!" he said in a hazy doubtful tone, and blinked.

M. Burdeaux of Paris was a man of medium build; he carried himself like a cosmopolitan, and had a rather unusually intelligent though rather too sharp a face. Unfortunately something seemed to be the matter with his neck. It was swathed about, and part of the dressing ran up to and partly covered the base of his jaw. At a glance any one would have said the carefully placed wrappings concealed some affliction, probably eczema or maybe boils; but I was there, if need be, to tear away the bandage and see if it did not conceal a scar, an emphatic pronounced scar at the base of the cheek.

But at a glance the mystery was ended. My ten-year-old memory now placed Burdeaux very well. I recognized him as the cheat I had interrupted. I recognized him more vividly as the man who had slipped from the room where Ann Adair lay dead.

Without irony and without mockery, I took a step toward him and smiled. All of his carefully builded security had tumbled about his head. He was cornered, trapped, caught. The tips of my fingers were just inside the pockets of my coat. I did not menace him. I made no threat in word or gesture. I waited patiently, looking at him, holding his eyes, watching him crumble, seeing fear grow and grow in his face.

A great crook, this M. Burdeaux of Paris, this Victor Buccleaugh, this Martin Martineaux, and the devil's registrar knows who all else he may have been in various parts of the world; but, after all, just a little too clever, which is the inevitable failing of every man who thinks himself so watchful, so shrewd, so audacious and full of brains that he does not need be honest. Too clever, all of them. They stumble over their own feet.

By what poor unlucky Vivian had said to me I knew in a flash that Buccleaugh was not dead; but that, being in peril from fellow crooks and detectives too, he had craftily palmed off a corpse—mutilated beyond actual identification—as himself. But I might never have suspected anything so near the truth as that Buccleaugh was Burdeaux had not the pseudo-detective ventured the "hypothesis" of my enmity for the supposedly dead man. That was so precise a guess that it augured an intimacy with the facts.

And I had said to McGrew:

"There undoubtedly *was* a M. Burdeaux from Paris, a detective. My guess is that his search came to a tragic end on the garbage dump in Elysian park—for why such effort to conceal the body's features when the clothing was left to tell the tale?

With M. Burdeaux's papers and a shaven face, Buccleaugh could pass among strangers as a detective. Ten years shuffling of events and memories leave him unapprehensive of being recognized as Martineaux.

"My guess is this: He saw me, had me followed, and chuckled to think of getting me hanged for killing himself—without any of the inconvenience to himself. The chauffeur blundered, and must have hastened to telephone Buccleaugh, who saw at once that the only safe way to keep the blunderer from crumbling was to kill him. I believe Buccleaugh made an appointment, to be kept immediately, in a Main Street rooming-house and killed him.

"There was some report, not authenticated, that a woman was the last person seen talking with him. She was suspected of having killed him. But I would say that the chauffeur, knowing where to find her—I'll explain why in a minute—talked with her a few minutes while waiting to go to the appointment. He probably felt the ground slipping under him, and told her some plain truths about Buccleaugh and how Buccleaugh was making a dupe of her. That is a guess, and it goes with this one:

"Ann Adair loved Buccleaugh, and he used her perhaps as a lure to get the real Burdeaux into his death. Whereupon Buccleaugh, being done with her and knowing she was dangerous if she ever became offended, thought the best thing to do was to murder her. He seems to have cared nothing at all about killing outright people who might not take a shot at him.

"I would say that he had, on some pretense or other, got Ann Adair to go in outwardly shabby garb and take lodgings where he would have a better chance to kill and leave her undetected. And she, certainly made suspicious—more than suspicious, warned, enlightened in some way, was writing her death warrant in the shape of a confession when he came in upon her—killed her with a blow, and, perhaps, dropped into her satchel the revolver he had used a few hours before on the chauffeur.

"I make a guess of all that, but of this I am not guessing: Buccleaugh loved Vivian with that fond madness that vicious men often have for the woman that thrills. He did not dare let her know the truth about himself, for whatever sins she may have had there was nothing evil, nothing vicious about her. He did not dare admit to her the crime of killing the detective, even to save himself. He was mad over her and let her waste in erratic splendor all of his goods.

"I believe that he returned to the house to get something, some papers maybe, or hidden funds. It may have been to see her. I do not know. But I would say that Lord Bob, in being turned away from the door may have caught sight of him lurking there, and they fought. Something of the kind happened.

"The next night he came again—came stealthily creeping up the trellis to the darkened window and heard; but he did not dare move until I was gone from the room. Then furiously jealous, he struck. That is my guess."

And old Tom McGrew saw for himself that the detective M. Burdeaux and the wanted man, Martin Martineaux, were as alike as two brothers; but out of the caution of forty years playing of the hazardous game of life and death with evidence, he was left in a little doubt—not much, but a little. After all, I had only been guessing. I again bargained with him, thus: The minute Burdeaux came into his room that night, where I was to be waiting, then McGrew could rouse up the detectives, the police, everybody and say he had caught sight of me and knew that I was there, in Room 333

And so he did.

Presently there was a thump of feet in the hall, a pounding on the door, with the hurried cry of—

"Burdeaux—open!"

Burdeaux was dead.

"A gunfighter never uses a knife," McGrew had said; but this was done with the dagger that Vivian had held, had offered to her breast, had thrown at my feet—and I felt that her unhappy ghost might be eased a little when she knew how Buccleaugh died. Justice may be satisfied with lead, but vengeance cries for steel.

When the officers and detectives broke in with guns drawn and faces set for battle, they found their Burdeaux on the floor and pinned to the foot of the bed above the body was the reward poster, and my name was signed to it. They found nothing more, for I was gone.

They searched high and they searched low, going over every inch of the room. They raised the windows and peered into the street below, wonderingly.

The chance, the luck, which had put McGrew's room directly over Burdeaux' was such that I could not ignore it. So I had dropped a knotted rope out of McGrew's window, made it fast to the ledge. He knew nothing about it. I could not bring myself to the idea of permitting an arrest. I do not want any man's hand to fall on my shoulder. So I left Burdeaux' room with an overhand climb, put the rope into my top-pocket, passed out of McGrew's room, down and out of the hotel while all the commotion of breaking through the door was going on—and no man who knew me caught sight of me again.

The finger-prints of the dead man showed what he had done, and who he was.

An attorney claimed the reward for me, making it clear however that it was not the money I wanted—or would accept—but the law's sanction for what I had done.

There was hubbub and wrangling, preachers even kicked up a racket and waspish editorials talked about encouraging "cold-blooded murder," and said the State would be in the position of having hired an assassin; and much more, very much more was said. The upshot of it was an informal understanding between my lawyer friend and the law that if I would keep well out of sight for a while, go on a long trip or something, that I would not be troubled when I came back. And I wasn't.

DRY ARIZONA

by E. E. Harriman

MORE than thirty years we'd wandered,
Me and Jim.
Pokes of dust I'd lightly squandered
Here with him.
When the lights were redly glowin',
And the liquor free was flowin',
And there wa'n't no way of knowin'
Who would win.

Now they've dried the amber fountains,
And the red.
Out in Harqua Hala Mountains
Jim lies dead.
Dead because his big heart busted
When he left this burg disgusted,
As he found the State he'd trusted
Dry as sin.

There I dug a grave and in it
Planted Jim;
Bared my head and fer a minute
Prayed fer him.
Pardner of my joys and sorrors,
He had dodged the dry tomorrors,
Left me to the holy horrors
They brung in.

The CAMP-FIRE

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

AS YOU know, his story in this issue is not his first in our magazine, but it is not his fault that Roy de S. Horn has not already followed Camp-Fire custom and introduced himself. The following was written September 1920:

Atlanta, Georgia.

Some time ago I received an invitation to appear before the Camp-Fire and explain myself, but owing to fatal illness in my immediate family I was unable to accept at the time. If it is not too late now, I would be glad to avail myself of the privilege.

IN THE first place I am a Southerner—born of most unreconstructed parents—and when I left town to join the Navy I am sure that my paternal grandfather revolved abundantly in his mausoleum. Having been brought up on distinctly Georgian literature and super-educated at the State University, I should have become a worthy citizen. But such an existence seemed entirely too tame, varied though it was by interclass fights and hazing; so at the end of my first year at college I deserted and hied myself to Annapolis with a midshipman's appointment which I had pried out of a Congressman.

Those were the good old days before the war. We didn't "haze;" but we did some mighty good disciplining under the name of "running." The technical difference, as far as I could gather, was that in "hazing" the upper-classmen did unpleasant things to you, whereas in "running" the upper-classmen merely mentioned the unpleasant things in your hearing and then you went and executed them upon yourself. That a "Plebe" should refuse to carry out his instructions was something unknown and unimagined; at least I never saw a single case of mutiny during my whole time there.

STRANGE as it may seem we all lived and thrived under the "running," put in ten hours a day at study and drill and still found time to hammer the everlasting daylights out of most of the more refined institutions of learning in various and sundry forms of athletics. And in off-times and holidays we amused ourselves by parading the streets of Washington in rainstorms and zero weather—I remember when we buried one Admiral the moisture of our breathing froze into ice on our upturned collars and for weeks afterward some of the midshipmen carried frost-bitten ears as large and outstanding as American Beauty roses.

My last "Summer cruise" before graduation was to the Mediterranean and along the coast of Africa. And while we were at Nice the war broke out. As we watched the French march off to battle the prospect of going back to another school year was far from exciting. Three of us even went so far as to plan how we would slip ashore, leaving our resignations on the Captain's desk, and enlisting in the Foreign Legion; but we reconsidered. Of the other two, one of them, Wedderburn, went down with the U.S.S. *Chauncey*; the other, Merion Cooper, has now been "missing" for two months from the Kosciusko Squadron, of which he was second in command.

GRADUATION sent me into the Navy and a variety of ships and duties: On a cruiser to Haiti, instructor at a training station, radio officer and rangefinder operator on a dreadnaught, special instruction and qualification as a torpedo officer, turret officer on another battleship. By this time we had entered the war, and I had requested duty on the other side. Then one day I was relieved from my turret: but instead of Europe I found my destination was the *Mayflower*, the President's yacht, at Washington.

One week after reporting aboard the *Mayflower* my right eye began to see double. Examination by an oculist resulted in my transfer to the hospital. It seems that the concussion of gun-fire had caused the turret periscope to injure a small blood vessel in my eye. When I came out of the hospital my sight was badly impaired and my naval career was gone. I spent most of my remaining Navy days as division radio officer and aide on an Admiral's staff. When demobilization came I was placed on the retired list.

RIGHT here I want to say that I don't begrudge my lost vision to the Navy; but I do kick at not getting into action, and I hereby reserve the right to wage war single-handed and unrefined at any future time until I have evened up for that perfectly good war I lost out on. All foreign nations requested to take warning.

RETIRED, I found myself very like Othello with his occupation gone. My retired pension prevented me from accepting employment with most of the companies to which I might have proved valuable, such as the large engineering, marine, and exporting companies. And my poor eyesight kept me from a lot of other things. So as a last desperate measure I turned on that portion of a long-suffering public that buy magazines to read. I obtained a typewriter and started in to "authorize."

As a midshipman I had attempted to write verse for the weekly "Log," but had been dissuaded through frequent immersions in the shower-bath; but now I let myself loose. The first thing I sold was a descriptive poem about Admiral Dewey's funeral—I not having attended at all, but remaining

aboard ship at Norfolk while the rest of the ship's company went to the funeral. I had been to lots of other funerals in Washington, though—and the Editor didn't know I wasn't there, anyway. Next came a few nautical articles, then a few short stories, mostly relating to the sea. And that brings me to about where I am now, being full of years—twenty-six of 'em—not to speak of literary aspirations and a real disinclination to stay put. But my adventuring is yet in the future; my past has been horribly devoid of excitement.—ROY DE S. HORN.

ONE Camp-Fire Station isn't enough for this comrade to offer the rest of us, so he has established one in Texas and one in Porto Rico:

San Juan, Porto Rico.

Just say for me that the Camp-Fire Station at Route 2, Box 189, Houston, Texas, is O. K. My family lives there and has for one hundred years back, same community, own the same property as then, and further, that I am on the job in Porto Rico; that I would welcome any *bona fide*, "blowed-in-the-glass" adventurer and globe-trotter. Expect to see Santo Domingo, Haiti and Cuba before returning to my home in Texas latter part of this year. Will do my best to start a permanent station here with some first class reliable native.—MATTHEW B. COUCH, U. S. Department of Labor, Office of the Commissioner.

A WORD from Arthur O. Friel in connection with his novelette in this issue:

Brooklyn, New York.

Maybe after reading "The Jararaca" you fellows will feel fed up on snakes. But if anybody cares for a little practical snake dope by way of a chaser, here she is:

BRAZIL, with its vast swamps and dense jungle, probably contains more venomous snakes than any other country. Of these the worst are the *jararaca* and the *surucucu* (bushmaster). Up to about a decade ago more than 1,000 people a year, according to the best estimates, were killed by snake-bite. In the state of São Paulo alone statistics showed a death-roll of 240 annually from this cause. Something had to be done.

Anti-venom serum treatment was tried, the serum being brought from Europe. The serum worked fine—in Europe. But it was no good in Brazil. Reason: It was made to counteract the bites of European and Asiatic snakes, and the Brazilian reptiles belonged to other orders. This is a point worth pasting in your sombrero: Different snakes have different poisons, with different effects on the human system. Consequently each kind of venom requires its own particular serum to offset it.

REALIZING this, Brazil got busy and erected at Butantan, near São Paulo city, a serotherapeutic institution—the "Garden of Serpents"—for the preparation and distribution of sure-fire serums to combat the bites of Brazilian snakes. As the two great genera of Brazilian serpents are the *crotalus* and the *bothrops*, three kinds of serum were made up: One anticrotalic, one antibothropic, and one polyvalent. The last-named—the polyvalent—is a combination of the other two, and so is good against the bites of all Brazilian snakes. These serums are distributed free to the very poor and to hospitals, and also to other cities. To the general public a small sum is charged for sealed tubes packed in small wooden boxes. A few tubes of this dope, along with the syringe, are a worth-while addition to the kit of any Brazilian bush-rover.

NOW, to leap lightly across the gulf into our own country, here's an odd bit of backwoods medicine:

In the Fall of 1920, while moving around a bit, I spent some time in a rather isolated mountain section infested by rattlers and copperheads. Among the few hillmen inhabiting the place was a "snake doctor," whose cures were said to be effected by means of ash-bark and snake-root. He was credited with having saved several lives, and his method of precedure was described as follows:

He would shave from the ash-tree a withe of bark, then dig up some snake-root. On reaching the victim he would wind the withe of ash around the bitten part, beyond the point to which the swelling had progressed—that is, between the bite and the heart. Then the snake-root was cut into chunks and boiled, after which the chunks were bound on the wound and kept wet with the water in which the boiling was done. That was all there was to it.

The hillmen asserted that the poison-swelling would not be beyond the ash withe, and that the snake-root drew the venom out. They also declared that snakes hate ash, and that a man sleeping under an ash-tree never will be troubled by snakes. They told of one native inhabitant who planted young ash-trees all round his little hill farm, and said that thereafter no snake ever was found on his land.

All of which may be true. It sounds like Indian medicine, and I know it to be a fact that the region used to be a great Indian country. At any rate, the mountaineers firmly believed in it. The snake-doctor himself wouldn't talk to me on that or any other subject, being a very taciturn—not to say morose—sort of cuss. As nobody was obliging enough to get bitten while I was there, and I didn't feel like taking a shot of snake-poison myself to test out the ash cure, I did not see any demonstration of it efficacy. So I am passing on the dope "as is."—ARTHUR O. FRIEL.

Concerning snake-bite cures I don't venture any opinions but in this case, like Mr. Friel, I'm still waiting to be shown, at least as regards the dislike of snakes for ash-trees. This Summer a small snake started under my feet and did the fastest traveling I've ever seen a snake do. I was standing in sparse second-growth very largely composed of ash, ranging from seedlings to several inches in diameter. He merely traveled ahead into some more of the same. Almost surely a harmless garter snake (though he went so fast through the leaves and plants that I saw little of him), but if ash keeps off poisonous snakes why not harmless ones as well?

Have also seen a snake within 50 feet of

this clump, two within 100 feet, the first not 15 feet from the living stumps of two or three small ash-trees. All harmless. Didn't note them carefully, but one was larger than any of the others and I killed one of those first seen, so there must have been at least several hanging out among or close to the ash-trees. Further, that country is full of ash and full of snakes. So I'm not betting heavily on ash-trees as scarecrows for snakes.

CHIGGERS, "you-all," massacres and snake-bite. Only those who haven't had chiggers will pass over the subject as inconsequential:

Arkansas.

I read with special interest the Camp-Fire department of *Adventure* and learn many things not to be found in other publications. I hope to be able to contribute at least one item of value, and that is in regard to that fiercest of all American animals (in proportion to its size) the "chigger," which will soon begin its Spring campaign against hunters, fishers, amateur botanists and other lovers of the woods and fields. The writer does not know how far north this pest ranges, but it is abundant here, especially in the woods. After trying coal-oil, vaseline and other alleged remedies without much effect, I was advised by a druggist to try a germicidal soap containing about one per cent. mercury, and found it to be certain death to the chigger if used on the day of exposure.

SOMETIMES a writer of Western or Southern stories has his characters use the expression "you-all," and frequently they use it in the singular number, which is never done in reality. The expression is a provincialism and is used by people of education as well as others in this section, and is always equivalent to "all of you." It seems to be an unconscious attempt to avoid the confusion caused by the fact that the pronoun "you" is both singular and plural. However, I can see how the Northern writers are led to believe that our people use the local expression in the singular, for frequently two people will meet and one will say to the other "How are you all?" His meaning is, "How are all of you?" or, "How are you and your family?" As to "we all," I have never heard it used, although there are people here from all the Southern States. There are people here from the Northern States also, and their most characteristic expressions are "Hadn't oughter" and "crick" (for creek).

THE articles on the Custer fight are interesting, and I assure your Northern readers that we of the South have a great admiration for General Custer. However, I do object to calling this battle a "massacre," for it was not a massacre but a fight to the finish in which the red men seem to have outgeneraled the whites. The so-called massacre of the Alamo is also incorrectly named, for the Americans refused to surrender and immortalized themselves by fighting until overwhelmed by numbers.

A friend has told me that the standard remedy for snake-bite among the hunters of the Blue Ridge Mountains is turpentine. But they have a peculiar way of applying it. It is carried in a small bottle with a large mouth, and when one is bitten he removes the stopper, inverts the bottle over the wound and holds it there until the poison is drawn into the liquid. My informant asserts that the venom can be seen as it ascends.—D. W. C.

JU-JITSU *vs.* boxing.

North Side, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

My younger brother-in-law and I, on the strength of a *Dan Wheeler* story, got into an argument with my oldest brother-in-law (an ex-pugilist) on the chances of a champion prize-fighter against an expert ju jitsuist. Has any such bout ever been staged? If so, what was the outcome? If not, what is the opinion of an expert on the outcome of such a match?—L. M. WILSON.

AS HE gave neither name nor address, the only way to answer the airman who wrote the following is to do as he suggests, print his letter in "Camp-Fire" along with Edgar Young's reply. And here's luck to him!

Prague, Tcheco-Slovakia.

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN: You may remember that Dicky Davis, to wind up the story of *Captain Macklin*, makes him leave a good position in New York on the receipt of a telegram from his former chief to take up again the life of adventure.

Davis here showed himself a profound judge of the adventurer, for one may seek very far before one will find a man who has once tasted the forbidden fruit who is content to leave it for a safe and sane existence in the midst of civilization.

THIS by way of introduction to a request. For the last fifteen years I have led a life more or less interesting. To top it off I served through the war, in one of the Allied armies before we came in and then in our own until almost a year after the Armistice. I had a respectable and even what some of the American newspapermen at the front were pleased to call a brilliant record. If decorations are any criterion, I have a half a dozen more or less, including the Distinguished Service Cross.

Now I find myself at the age of thirty-nine engaged in work that promises to guarantee me against want for the rest of a normal existence, but, like *Captain Macklin*, dissatisfied with a staid existence. In short, I am only too willing to throw it all up, for I "hear the East a-calling." The question is, Where shall I go? I have lost contact since 1914 with every one I knew in the wild places of the world. In face of this dilemma I decided to "Ask Adventure." Undoubtedly some one of your collaborators, more than likely Edgar Young, can suggest to me some corner of the world where I can still find some amusement.

You will pardon my not signing this letter. If I did I am afraid that you would recognize the name, as for a time it and my photograph appeared quite frequently in the public prints. I prefer to guard my incognito for a number of reasons entirely personal. If you consider this script worthy of an answer, kindly publish it in *Adventure*. If it appears any time during the next six months

I shall see it, as I am one of your most faithful readers.

Of course Edgar Young came across. He always does when it's possible, and sometimes when it isn't.

Brooklyn, New York.

This man has the countersign, the grip, the secret works of a real adventurer. Many times I have done just what he is figuring on doing. When the spirit of adventure calls it will not be denied for any great time.

I DID a bit of adventuring in South America, Central America and Mexico, and a man can find plenty to interest him in all of the countries mentioned. Possibly South America can come as near furnishing places for the simon-pure article as any other part of the world. The lower Amazon can be prowled with a small boat, as can also the middle Amazon country. In the upper Amazon headwaters it is canoe work, and walking when that plays out. The stretch of country between the Amazon and the top of the range of mountains in the Guianas is unknown. The only person supposed to have made it was a white lady with two or three children. She lost her husband, and, calling on her streak of lean, started out. I saw an account of this in an old book, but I doubt the reality of it much. There is said to be a very bad race of dwarf Indians in that stretch of territory who live in trees and shoot poison darts from above.

THERE is also much unknown country in western Brazil and all the other countries that join it on that side. They have never surveyed out the lines between the countries, and the maps of the countries don't jibe very well. On the boundary between Peru and Ecuador and running into each country is the land of the head-hunting Jivero Indians, said to be rich in gold and platinum but well guarded from prospectors, as may be imagined. The other Indians of eastern Ecuador are tame with one exception, a small tribe of cannibals on the Venezuela border. Between Bolivia and Brazil and into both countries for several hundred miles is some wild country also. Southern Brazil from the base of the mountains almost to the coast is an unknown quantity. I was back into it for 1,100 miles more or less. The Indians are black with straight hair and go stark naked. They are wild as deer but will fight, using heavy bows and arrows. They are locally called *bogres*. They mutilate themselves by cutting the lips and putting in blocks of wood with holes in them, by ear and nose piercing, and by slashing. There are some fine stretches of pine timber in this portion of Brazil.

I met a man before I went in the bush who had made a canoe trip from the headwaters of the Paraná all the way to Buenos Aires. I met an exploring chemist in Cerro de Pasco, Peru, who had spent months alone on the eastern side of the Andes. I met a prospector in São Paulo, Brazil, who had hiked all the way from Lake Titicaca. He had a small fortune in rough diamonds. I met an old man living in a hut on the Straits of Magellan who had hiked lengthwise most of the way from Alaska! In Nicaragua I met my friend J. Cilch, who had been back in the mountains so long he had a beard the length of my arm. He is somewhere down there now. I met two lads (Englishmen) who had walked across the continent from Rio de Janeiro to Cerro de Pasco, Peru. I met a fellow in Mount Hope, Canal Zone, who had walked from Cerro de Pasco to the Zone. Also saw Harry Francke pass the station while I worked at Gatun. He had recently arrived from his walk from the States. Met another who had sailed a small boat out of Punta de Arenas and started mining on an island in the Pacific. Savages killed part of their number and they mopped up with the savages, killing all they could find. Also talked with Cap Durfee in Gatun. He was an ex-Army officer of the old school and had been years in Latin America. He took a small boat up the Amazon as far as it would go, and then he and party hiked over to the Pacific. I could go on and on.

TO SUM up: I would suggest the eastern part of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia (Chile is well known); the country between the Amazon and the mountains of the Guianas; southern Brazil and all of western Brazil; the islands off the end of South America for a cruise in Summer. For Central America the backbone range running lengthwise down through them. Prospecting for minerals is a good line; also some of the big lumber companies might be interested in any large unknown tracts of pine or *imbuha* or hardwoods. Natural-history specimens also give a man an excuse to be off over into such a country. Also trading for rubber and native products if a man is going where he can get the stuff along easy. The adventurer is paid in his own coin—the roar of a waterfall, the silence of a forest, the midnight howl of a wild animal, the soaring moon and the floating clouds, the hard jaunt to reach the top of the hill to see what lies on the other side, the peace of mind which comes of being far from the clack and jostle of the herd—these things are legal tender for a man who feels like our brother at Prague. Here's how, Bill, whether you are an American Ambassador or a plain hobo! Shake! I'm for you.—EDGAR YOUNG.

RABBITS. Some time ago W. C. Tuttle of our writers' brigade told us of an incident that showed them not to be such weak critters after all. A comrade who had overseas experience with one rises to second the motion.

San Francisco, Calif.

I RAN across an article in Camp-Fire of the case of a rabbit that had shown unusual resistance after being shot. I wonder if any of your readers ever saw a rabbit fight a dog. Some of your readers will recall this incident. In the late Summer of 1917, the company I was with camped at No. 4 Camp, Bassans, France. At the end of the company streets was a big wood-pile, in which a rabbit took up his home and attached himself to the camp for rations. It was a rather small rabbit, not one of the big jacks.

There were also two "frog" dogs attached to the camp for rations, and every night after mess the boys would take one of the dogs down to the wood-pile and the rabbit would come out and they would go to it. I have seen the rabbit jump up and grab

one of the dogs by the nose and hang on by his teeth while the dog ran around howling.

And another time I saw the rabbit chase the bigger of the two dogs down the company street and make a flying tackle of one of the dog's front legs and roll it over on its back. The dog got up and put its tail between its legs and ran away.

It may be that the dogs were only kidding us all the time. If that was what they were doing they were great actors, and deserve a place on the French stage right after Sarah Bernhardt. Eventually one of the dogs grabbed the rabbit by the back during the fight and killed it.

A bunch of German "P. G.'s" on their way back to their prison camp one evening, stopped to watch the fight and one of them asked what kind of a rabbit it was. One of the boys told them it was an American rabbit, and the Jerries got quite a kick out of that. This may not sound very probable, but there are 20 men in this city alone who were in the camp at that time; one of them is ex-Capt. Hugh Wiley, who writes for the *Saturday Evening Post*. If you print this you will surely get confirmation of its truth from others who have seen the fighting rabbit of Bassans.—E. CLANCY.

A WORD and a clipping from Gordon Young in connection with his novelette in this issue:

Los Angeles, California.

This clipping came from yesterday's paper. I believe a little extract from it would not be out of place in "Camp-Fire" when you begin the story, as I bear down pretty heavily in that story on the fact that crime *is* organized and commercialized; and that, without influential and "respectable" fences to play the part of bankers, thieves would soon starve to death.—GORDON YOUNG.

CHICAGO—Ten thousand Chicago men and women have taken up crime as a profession and are practicing it with all the skill of modern business, Henry Barrett Chamberlain, operating director of the Chicago crime commission, declared today in a speech before a meeting of business men.

In 1919, he said, this "crime trust," did a $12,000,000 business here. The trust can be defeated, he added, by nothing less efficient than their own organization. Business men must see to it that law enforcements are upheld.

"Crime is an established business in Chicago," Mr. Chamberlain said. "It has been centralized, organized, commercialized. It is as steady a business as any that you gentlemen conduct.

"Crime does not come in waves. It is not the result of hard times, nor poverty, nor bad weather. It is just plain choice of a majority of those who follow it as a business."

LAST call for our annual vote by readers on the ten best stories published by our magazine during 1921. Voting is an easy matter. Any one can vote. Here are the particulars:

ALL you need to do is write the titles and authors' names of the ten stories you consider best, given in order of preference, and mail us the sheet of paper to reach us not later than December thirty-first. If you like, and as many as ten more for honorable mention. As in the past years, short stories, novelettes, novels and serials are included, poems, Camp-Fire and the other departments are barred out. The issues covered are those dated January 3, 1921, to December 30, 1921, inclusive. Serials only parts of which are contained in these issues are included.

We very sincerely want your cooperation and help in getting for *Adventure* the kind of story and the authors that a majority of our readers like best. If you know of a better way of furthering this cooperation than is the annual vote of readers, name it, for we are ready to try any legitimate plan that will help register your wishes in the making of the magazine. It's not only common sense to strive for this but it's a lot happier and more comfortable all around if people work together in friendly fashion.

WHILE the departments are excluded from the vote, we'll be more than glad to get suggestions for improving them or adding to them, but don't forget that "Letter-Friends" and "Wanted" have already been tried, and, though successful and popular, had to be given up because two or three readers abused them.

And if you have any suggestions concerning the magazine in general or any part of it, by all means send them in. I mean constructive suggestions that will definitely point out ways for improvement. Wherever we can meet your ideas we will, but remember that it is the majority whom we must please and that, while a given plan may please a minority and perhaps us here in the office, if it fails to please the majority it is not warranted.

But the only way to find out what the majority want is for the readers themselves to tell us. And you are one of the readers.

A CURIOUS coincidence appearing from the two following letters shows how the fiction writer can never be quite sure his fiction may not be fact or parallel fact:

Liverpool, England.

In the July 18, 1921, *Adventure* I was very much interested in the story by Frederick William Wallace called "The Mate of the *Androsina*."

IN July, 1893, I was an apprentice on the British four-masted ship *Lord Wolseley*, bound from New York to Calcutta. My particular chum was an A. B., called Jim Walker, who was a native of Windsor, Nova Scotia. Although I lived in the "half-deck" and he "forward," being the only natives of North America aboard, we were drawn together. After being about six weeks on our passage, off the Tristan da Cunha Islands, we were running before a strong breeze and it became necessary to take in the main upper topgallant sail. Jim and an apprentice called Billy Kernahan went aloft to make the sail fast. Jim, being a man, took the heaviest part of the sail, the weather yard-arm, and instead of obeying the law of one hand for yourself and one for the owners, used both. On a heavy roll to windward the sail got away from him and threw him off the yard. He fell and struck the life-boat davit on the port side and went overboard. There was a very heavy

sea running at the time and it was impossible to recover his body.

I wondered if Mr. Wallace knew of this case, which was an accident without a doubt, and used it as a foundation for his story. I could by no stretch of imagination, however, connect the mate of the *Lord Wolseley* or any other officer aboard of her with the mate of the *Androsina*. I have followed the sea for thirty years and have served under three flags, but have yet to sail in a "hell-ship," although I heard of plenty in my early days. I have been a reader of *Adventure* since it started, and if I am away a friend always saves the back copies.—RICHARD H. WEBB, Master, S. S. *West Celeron*.

Gardenvale, Quebec, Canada.

MY DEAR MR. HOFFMAN:

Many thanks for permitting me to peruse Captain Webb's letter.

It is a curious coincidence that both name and accident should be the same in fact and fiction. In writing my yarn, I had nothing to go on and the whole thing was imagination.

As Captain Webb remarks, the day of the "hell-ship" is long past and belongs to an age not known by present-day seafarers. The mate of the *Androsina* was a survival and got what was coming to him.—F. W. WALLACE.

IT HAS been reported through third parties that at least one man went to Central America as a result of a letter printed in Camp-Fire and found conditions there not at all to his liking and not as represented in the letter. It was a reader's letter, not a statement from any one connected with the magazine. That he has had a hard time in consequence is very much to be regretted, particularly as the information he banked on appeared in our magazine.

But it must be remembered that our Camp-Fire is an open forum, as has been pointed out in the past. Within reason and the limitations of our space, any reader may talk at Camp-Fire if what he has to say promises to interest the rest of you. But that does not make any of the rest of you, nor Camp-Fire as a whole, nor this magazine, responsible for his opinions or statements. Many of our discussions, like those on Custer, the Gila monster and cures for snake-bites, have included many flatly opposite opinions. As has been stated before, neither the magazine nor I vouch for what others say at Camp-Fire; it is not our place to do so; the discussion is an open one.

If one of you reads something from some one else at Camp-Fire and wants to act on it, naturally he acts on his own responsibility. Common sense would lead him to investigate and verify before going ahead, instead of accepting one unknown man's statements at their full face value. Camp-Fire is a place for all of us to talk, but neither the magazine nor any one else can possibly be expected to be responsible for whatever any one may say. Not only would it be impossible for us to verify every word of every statement made, but it is not the magazine's place to do so and it would ruin the whole spirit of Camp-Fire if the magazine were to try. It would have to become a despotic censor, allowing no one to talk about anything until it had shaped what he wanted to say to such a statement as it could vouch for in every particular. Camp-Fire would cease to be a free forum; no one would be allowed to express opinions unless everything he said could be proved to be indisputable fact.

OUR Camp-Fire is like a real camp-fire. A man can talk when he feels like it without producing an encyclopedia and a stack of other reference books to prove every word he utters. (If he makes a mistake, other comrades are almost sure to catch him up.) At a real camp-fire is a man supposed to act on everything he hears without stopping to consider who said it and without looking for any other information on the subject?

And at our Camp-Fire are we to talk about nothing that is open to a difference of opinion, to have no discussions, no threshing out of various matters? What a dull time any group of people would have if they weren't allowed to talk about anything that wasn't already settled.

If one says a certain place is so-and-so, that is merely his contribution to the general discussion. The next speaker may contradict him flatly. That is merely his contribution. Any one would be foolish to act on either statement without investigating thoroughly. The discussion has done for him the valuable service of raising the points that need to be investigated, but that is all.

If a man wants information from this magazine, "Ask Adventure" is offered for that purpose, though even in it our responsibility does not extend beyond a sincere effort to provide information that is reliable. The man who found things in Central America not as he expected, apparently didn't take the trouble to write to "A. A." If he had, I don't doubt that Edgar Young would have given him data he'd have

found dependable. I'm sincerely sorry he's suffered in consequence, but he has no right to blame this magazine.

NEWS comes of the death of F. St. Mars, of our writers' brigade, "after great suffering patiently and nobly borne." I can well believe that last, for through all my correspondence with him his splendid courage and cheerfulness have stood forth as strongly as his great need of them. I know that Camp-Fire rises with me to salute him and wish him Godspeed on the Long Trail. He was only thirty-eight years of age. How far would this man of such great gifts have gone if he could have lived out in good health the full span of years? I know with what eager interest you have greeted his stories in our magazine, but have you ever applied to him the broader measure, considered what place he is likely to hold in permanent literature? From an article by Coulson Kernahan in the *London Quarterly Review* I am, through the courtesy of that magazine, passing on to you some brief quotations. They will, I think, give an added interest to the considerable number of his stories we are fortunate enough to have still on hand:

"*The English Review* described Mr. St. Mars as 'a writer in the same line of succession as Jefferies, Kipling, Roberts and Thompson Seton, but he more deliberately aims at vividness and simplicity. . . . He is an artist whose best moments are better than those of any of his predecessors.' . . .

"BUT when *The English Review* speaks of St. Mars as 'in the same line of succession as Jefferies,' I venture to disagree, and I do so with some knowledge of the work of both writers. . . Between his work and St. Mars' there can be as little comparison as between a painting by Turner and a photograph from life. In saying this I am not belittling the marvel, the miracle almost, of photography. Of the two the photograph is possibly the more wonderful. . . .

"I do not claim for Frank St. Mars that he is another Jefferies, but as an observer and a picture-maker I believe that he is entitled to a place, a high place, of his own, among those who have written most memorably of Nature. . . .

"Yet Mr. St. Mars, ill-health and the heavy handicap which ill-health imposes upon him in winning a livelihood and in doing justice to his genius notwithstanding—there is no other word than genius for the way in which he makes the wild live for us—is by temperament a normal young Englishman, a sportsman by taste as well as a naturalist, and by choice a soldier. . . .

"Not, Jefferies, not even Heine, writing poems and satires from his 'mattress grave,' worked under difficulties seemingly more insurmountable than Frank St. Mars has for some years now surmounted and overcome. He is one of three brothers, the other two not long surviving after birth, a similar fate being predicted by all the doctors for himself. What is certain is that before he could read, he could have told you the name of every bird and beast in the standard books on natural history; and first as a lad, and later as a man, was only completely happy in long days under the sun, or in long night vigils under the stars, watching, observing and studying the ways and habits of the wild creatures that he loves. . . . . the game, whether football, cricket, or hockey which Mr. St. Mars played best, was always a losing game. . . .

"THE book which Colonel Patterson thus introduced won the enthusiastic admiration of another great game-hunter, the late ex-President Roosevelt, who wrote Mr. St. Mars a personal letter of admiration and thanks. That 'On Nature's Trail' should thus appeal to sportsmen is not surprizing, for Mr. St. Mars, ill-health and weakness notwithstanding, is—or I fear I must now say 'was'—himself a sportsman and a good shot. Whether he holds and handles his gun and alines his sights according to the approved 'form' I do not know, but I am told that he 'gets there' each time. His swift, strenuous, almost stenographic style is as directly 'on the target' as the bullet which brings down the quarry, quivering and life-hot."

—*From "Frank St. Mars' Pictures of Wild Life," by Coulson Kernahan, in the* London Quarterly Review *of April*, 1921.

OUR Oneida comrade speaks to us again, and we should listen with unusual deference to this representative of a people who have been a consistent friend to Americans from the beginning. By deciding against us they might have changed the entire history of this continent, and our repayment for their friendly aid has been such as to make us feel shame.

Waterbury, Connecticut.

I noticed in *Adventure* a comrade's letter. I wrote to Camp-Fire some time ago a letter touching on the political control and democracy of the Six Nations. I take it that I did not make myself clear in that letter. As you know, it would be very hard to give an accurate name, or even try to do so, in regard to American Indians, without running the chance of being contradicted. The Indian mind is not understood by white people. In so far as most races on the face of our world, they have their ancient history that has been handed down from one generation to the next.

AS I did not try to make myself authentic (as that would be very difficult), I hope that comrade "W. M." will not mistake my wording. Perhaps comrades of the Camp-Fire do not understand that the Oneidoes or Oneida, or what the world may choose to call us, are not just one tribe, but we are one of a number of clans that make up the entire Iroquoian tribe (or the other way around if you wish), which consists of the following, all of Iroquoian blood: Oneida, Cayuga, Cherokee, Hurons, Iroquois, Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, Tuscarora, Wyandot. There is, I believe, another

clan or tribe of the same blood, which I can not recall by name just now. The Mohawk was, at the time when the English and French fought their first colonial war, the most powerful, and the least peaceful of them all. It was the Oneidas that caused the split in council when the Mohawk voted war against the whites, and the Oneidas voted to stay peaceful, and from that day on they had to fight for their existence, against both white and red man, until they were scattered to the different points where they finally settled.

THE people that I am descended from are a small group (as I understood from my grandfather) that were away on a war or hunting party, and when they returned to camp found the place in dying embers, and a few bodies left, including a soldier in uniform with a roasting-pole stuck through his neck, where he attacked a squaw, and they died together, she from knife-wounds and he from his own blood. Several women and children were found in hiding, but most of them had been killed and scalped. He said that a council was called and they decided to send a party in pursuit, so the best of the party was sent out after the marauders. The balance turned back through where Delaware is now, and headed for the South. The others were to rejoin them in flight from the North, but were never heard of after. The fate of that body of braves that gave chase to the marauders has never been learned. The balance of the party, scarcely forty in number, settled in the Carolinas and became mixed with people of Scotch blood. Some of them can possibly be found in the Cherokee or Catawba tribes in the Carolinas. There are two, I believe, who live near Fort Mill, S. C., in the Catawba River section, near the falls.

I WISH to say this much: there are no records that I know of that can show any instance of an Oneida ever breaking a promise sincerely given, and they were the only ones that suffered their lands to be taken and retreated to other parts, rather than to break the promise to their white brethren not to make war upon them, even after their homes had been destroyed. Thus passes from this world a race of people that were better than their aggressors—who were branded savages and murderers unto this day.—LEARUY J. BENTON, Ex U. S. N.

THE author of "The Gunman" in this issue, George Pearson, served with the Princess Pats during the war and some of you who did the same will have an extra greeting for him.

AN EXPERIENCE with the San Blas—a peaceful but interesting one:

St. Louis.

Boys, may I lay a chunk on your fire and throw out a little light?

I WAS born on a ranch out in the good old State of Kansas in 1880. I have been a soldier, sailor, farmer, expert red-lead burner, engineer (traction), steel-worker, newspaperman, solicitor, collector, salesman, manager of a road crew (as well as gun crew), and—yes, I've been in "limbo" too. Had a —— of a time convincing the powers that be that *I* didn't plug the poor devil that they found me standing over.

Belong to the United Spanish War Veterans and American Legion. Been married sixteen years. When the big fuss started with the boche I buckled on the harness and went out again. I left a $200 job for one paying $44—I came back busted up in my right shoulder. I don't work steel any more. I am working a typewriter, under the guidance of Washington University and the Federal Board for Vocational Training—trying to learn how to drag checks from hard-hearted editors.

BUT—what stirred me most to hammering the old machine tonight, was Mr. Bishop's story, "Ten Thousand *Hectáreas*."

Mr. Bishop's story is the first I ever read of, concerning the San Blas Indians. It thrilled me, yet it in a way disappointed me. You will know why I say "disappointed," when I tell you that I have been working for a long time on a story which has to do with the San Blas—I have been there with them and been in their huts as their guest—but I can't write, at least not yet, well enough to vividly, and with close attention to detail, portray an honest account of the lives of these wonderful Indians, who have kept their race pure and have held on to every inch of their territory. Something I do not believe any other race on the face of the globe has done; black, white or red!

ABOUT eighteen years ago I was in the San Blas country; that is, I might more correctly say, in the edge of, or on the border of, the San Blas country. The Gulf of Darien. I was at that time serving on board a little eight-hundred-ton gunboat of the United States Navy.

I do not know how others have found the San Blas; but aside from the fact that they were suspicious, I and the rest of my shipmates found them very courteous, especially so when one thinks of their reputation (carried out to civilization by those who have had occasion to feel their wrath) and death-defying traditions.

WELL, the skipper sent us ashore one day for a boat-load of fresh water. We rolled up our trousers, took off our shoes, and, armed with a "handy billy" and plenty of hose, struck out for the beach in a sailing-launch. Part of the gang would pump while the rest would forage around in the jungle and hunt coconuts and bananas.

The first signs of life that we noticed were when a dugout canoe darted out from the beach about two hundred yards away, the occupants paddling like the very —— for the mainland. We found out later that they were San Blas women. At that time we knew nothing of their traditions and aversion for white men or, in fact, any men except San Blas.

About five minutes from the time the dugout started for the mainland we were surrounded by eight San Blas men. And what I mean, buddy, they looked bad, —— bad!

WE HAD a few coconuts and bananas lying about—I say lying about, for we had suddenly lost our appetite. We stood there, twenty-two of us, and every one with a Colt hanging on his leg;

but, gentlemen, there was something about those little savages that struck us dumb. Their absolute fearlessness, their dark, burning, questioning eyes, that seemed to say, "White men, why are you here?" kept us from drawing a gun—and I might as well remark that it was well that we did not. We would have been riddled by other San Blas hidden in the jungle less than two hundred feet away before we could have fired a shot. And then again, wasn't this their land, their home?

OUR fresh-water detail was in charge of an old-time boatswain's mate who spoke pretty good Spanish (not academic Spanish, but as she is spoken up and down the Caribbean) and he managed to open up conversation with the head gun, or chief spokesman, of the San Blas.

He told them we had come for *agua*, but the boys had taken a few coconuts and bananas to eat, not to take away.

When the San Blas found out that we were Navy men from the United States and willing to pay for everything that we got, they powwowed among themselves for a time and finally said that we could have all the coconuts and bananas that we wanted. We picked up what we had already gathered and laid them in the stern-sheets of the boat. Then we had another little talk—rather old Bill Shanahan the boatswain's mate did.

SUDDENLY it struck me that the proper thing when among Indians is to give presents. Any Indian, whether he is a Sioux, San Blas or Patagonian, likes a present. I have always maintained that a man could take a quart of whisky, a red bandanna handkerchief and a plug of ship's tobacco and go through any darn country on the face of the globe except—the San Blas! I slowly and cautiously unloosed the lanyard around my waist that held my regulation jack-knife (and, boys, they were "humdingers" those days, no little manicuring-tool like was issued to me during the late war). I extended this (butt first) to the head spokesman and grinned. Not a line of the features of that noble little red man changed. He looked just exactly like an old-time poker-player with a straight flush on his hands. He felt of the edge of the blade and tossed it a couple of times to heft it, then handed it to one of his companions. I jerked the silk neckerchief from my neck and handed it to him. Still that poker face. I was soon followed by the rest of my shipmates in presenting jack-knives and neckerchiefs, and every one of us went back to the ship and put in a special requisition for "small stores."

WE GOT along fine with the San Blas. They came out to our ship in their *cayucas*, those long dugout canoes, made from a single log that no white man would try to navigate, especially in a heavy sea.

We took them aboard ship. They looked over our ice-machine and condenser. They went into our refrigerator and had the door closed (just to see how cold it sometimes became in the white man's country) and came out with much shivering. I caught what I thought was a faint smile from one of them at this juncture, but I have always been in doubt about it. They are not often that demonstrative.

Finally one of our officers, a midshipman just out of Annapolis (today an admiral) handed the chief a good-sized chunk of ice—he dropped it like a hot spud! We came very near losing his friendship right there!

We had a little more powwowing and San Blas palaver; then they all scrambled over the side and into their dugouts and paddled like a streak for the beach. I believe they just tried that afternoon to show us what a San Blas could do with a paddle—shipmates, they went like a new-born destroyer on trial trip.

THE next time we went ashore the San Blas took us through three of their houses. From what I can remember they were made of reeds, poles and jungle grass with thatched roofs and a loft made of poles laid close together. A crude ladder led to the loft, and native cooking-utensils were scattered around and evidence of late occupancy; but, boys—nary a woman or kid in sight! Nor did we set eyes upon one all the time we were in the San Blas country. Neither did we try. Our captain had told us of the San Blas traditions, and we, as Americans, respected them. And the San Blas, knowing this by our actions, trusted us—to a certain degree.

We left their country as friends, and I hope that, in the years that have passed, no man of the United States Navy has betrayed, or tried to betray, that friendship and tried to get a look at their women—they won't stand for it, boys! Their women and their gold they are going to keep as long as a San Blas man can stand up and fight!

THEY have got the gold; yes, mountains and rivers full of it. They wear great golden earrings beaten from virgin gold. They use gold in many ways; but, comrades, if you want any of it you will have to get it in honest barter; and I doubt if you can do a rushing business even at that.

What little I know of the San Blas made Mr. Bishop's story very interesting to me, especially his characterization of "*Henry Clay*," the San Blas.

Some day I may be able to finish my story, woven around the San Blas country, but that time is not yet; I must wait until I am able to portray them at their full worth, and these gifts do not come at one's bidding. *Adios.*—VERNE VICTOR BARNES.

SOME one has been posing as the writer of Arthur O. Friel's stories in our magazine, stating that Mr. Friel's name is only a pen-name. Mr. Friel states that it is his own name, that he has never used any other and that, so far as he knows, he is the only Arthur O. Friel in existence. I can find no reason for questioning Mr. Friel's statement and consequently label the other party in the case as a liar and impostor.

The name used by this impostor in at least one Eastern city is known to us, but of course he may have used other names in other places. You will remember that Talbot Mundy and several other writers have been impersonated during the past year or so. One man may be doing it all, or several. The safe thing is not to accept any one who claims to be a well-known writer unless he can establish his identity.—A. S. H.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Mid-Jan., First and Mid-Feb., First March, First and Mid-April, Mid-June, First July, First and Mid-Aug., Mid-Sept., Mid-Nov., 1920. Twelve issues, all in good condition for two dollars.—Address CHRISTOPHER G. ENNIS, 344 Willow St., Waterbury, Conn.

WILL SELL: Dec., 1916 to date, for ten cents each.—THOM. CASEY, Waverly, Minn.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

In their homes or shops some members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to—maintain Stations where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bear the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making in itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelop is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, 1508 Columbia St., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

3. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

4. ★ New Zealand; and South Sea Islands Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

5. South Sea Islands Part 2
CHARLES BROWN, JR., 213 E St., San Rafael, Calif. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn). Natives, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

6. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Sydney Press Club, 51 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, natives, history, institutions.

8. New Guinea
DR. ALBERT BUELL LEWIS, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, natives, history, institutions.

9. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, 5444 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif. History, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

10. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 103 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

11. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

12. Asia, Southern
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

13. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), care *Adventure*. Petrograd and its province; Finland, northern Caucasus, Primorsk district, island of Sakhalien. Travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

14. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, Niger River to Jebba, northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora, tribal histories, witchcraft.

15. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan,

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents—in Mr. Beadle's case 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached*)

Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

16. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand

CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care of Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

17. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East

R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

18. Africa Part 5 Morocco

GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

19. Africa Part 6 Tripoli

CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine St., New Orleans, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

20. Africa Part 7 Egypt and Barbary States

J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Tradd Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Egypt and Sudan, Tunis, Algeria. Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

21. Turkey and Asia Minor

J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

22. Balkans

J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Greece, Albania, Jugo-Slavia, Bulgaria, Roumania. Travel, history, topography, language, customs, trade opportunities.

23. South America. Part 1

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

24. South America Part 2

P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

25. Central America

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

26. Mexico Part 1 Northern

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 West 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexio—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

27. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California

C. R. MAHAFFEY, Topolobampo, Sinaloa, Mexico. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, business and general conditions.

28. ✠ Canada Part 1

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Height of Land and northern Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

29. ✠ Canada Part 2

HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Ottawa Valley and southeastern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

30. ✠ Canada Part 3

GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Georgian Bay and southern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

31. Canada Part 4

T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Hunters Island and English River district. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

32. Canada Part 5

ED. L. CARSON, La Connor, Wash. Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

33. ✠ Canada Part 6

REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

34. ✠ Canada Part 7

JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

35. Alaska

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

36. Western U. S. Part 1

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

37. Western U. S. Part 2

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas and Oklahoma. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

38. Middle Western U. S. Part 1

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially early history of Missouri Valley.

39. Middle Western U. S. Part 2

JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

40. Middle Western U. S. Part 3

LARRY ST. JOHN, Saugatuck, Mich. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

41. Eastern U. S. Part 1

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating; river tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

42. Eastern U. S. Part 2

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

43. Eastern U. S. Part 3

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

WEAPONS, PAST and PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

A.—All Shotguns including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheellock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially of New England. Arthur Bent, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

STANDING INFORMATION

For information on trade in any part of the world, address J. L. Binda, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Comm., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

Texas Oil Strikes

OF COURSE, there may be another to add to this between the time this issue is printed and the time it reaches you. Those given below, however, have proved up, which naturally takes time:

Question:—"Will you please list for me the principal oil strikes of recent years in Texas, giving approximate dates, name and approximate size of principal town at each, and present state of activity. Would also like to know where I can obtain a good general-purpose map of Texas. I should like sufficient information to enable me to choose my destination, as I am heading for the fields very shortly. I have worked in California oil, and know too much about it to be tempted to speculate, but have a strong hunch that my partner and I can make a good thing out of feeding those who do. Even speculators must eat, and as for drillers and toolies—WOW! You ought to see 'em!

I am not interested in the older fields, such as Batson, Sour Lake, Humble, etc., as they must be pretty humdrum by now, but would greatly appreciate any information you may have regarding the newer ones."—F. W. HARRIMAN, Cordelia, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—Most of the recent so-called big oil strikes in Texas can be dated from the Summer and Fall of 1919 and the Spring of 1920. The one that is being boomed now is in Pecos County, not far from Ft. Stockton. This pool was discovered in August or September of 1920.

The biggest and best strikes have been made in Wichita County at Wichita Falls and at Electra; Burk-Burnett (Wichita Falls 40,000, Electra about 650 population); in Stephens Co., Caddo Fields, (Breckenridge 1,000, Caddo 200); Palo Pinto Co., Strawn Field, (Strawn about 700, town of Palo Pinto over 500); Eastland Co., Ranger Field, (Ranger about 16,000); Erath Co., Desdemona Field, (Stephenville about 1,200); Brown Co., Brownwood Field, (Brownwood about 1,000); Williamson Co., Thrall Field, (Georgetown 3,100); Bexar Co., Alta Vista Field, (San Antonio 161,000); McMullen Co., Crowther Pool, (Tilden about 500); the present one in Pecos Co., (Ft. Stockton 8,400).

I could name several more pools with a strike here and there, but they would be of no practical value to you. I have given you the population of the towns in normal times, at or near the oil strikes. The floating population would swell these figures to many times their natural size.

Most of these fields are in a state of inactivity at present, with the exception of Ranger and Burk-Burnett. There are usually a large number of wells, often "wildcat" of course, brought in during the Spring and early Summer months of each year. These last long enough for the promoters and their associates to reap a rich harvest of their endeavor.

The best bet on the table at present is the Pecos country. The oil streak seems to be in a southwestward direction across the State, so look for the next big oil boom to be in the southwestern counties.

You noticed that the majority of the oil strikes I have mentioned are near small towns, so that the feeding and housing (shelter of any kind) has been a hard problem to combat on account of the sparsely settled condition of the country and the lack of transportation facilities. Eats, gee! But a meal at Ranger a year ago would have set you back a couple of bucks and up—an ordinary meal of pre-war times of 15c. Can you imagine the bank account some of those birds that got in on the ground floor have stored away?

It makes me dizzy trying to figure their profit. Cots, usually six in a tent 12x14 feet, from two dollars to five dollars each for a few winks of sleep. The cots were usually a little buggy at that, but you got this "extra" gratis.

Ranger has changed greatly in the past few months and is now settling down to a dignified city—was built in a few weeks but seems to be there for good now.

The Ft. Worth *Star-Telegram* at Ft. Worth, Texas, puts out a dandy map of Texas showing the oil strikes, auto roads and a general-utility map each year about Christmas time. C. S. Hammond & Co., 30 Church St., New York; the Geographical Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill., and several other engraving and publishing companies have good maps on the market. Inquire at your book-store.

Fernando Noronha

ONE of those quaint bits of the world, so interesting to know about because it's so useless:

Question:—"Sorry to bother you again; but is it possible for you to tell me about the Fernando Noronha Islands? Such as population, products, value or importance, flora, fauna, largest buildings, lighthouses, etc."—JOHN ROGERS VI, Anadarko, Okla.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—You appear to have a yearning toward knowledge of useless bits of earth. Fernando Noronha, lying about 200 miles off the Brazilian coast at Cape San Roque, is a Brazilian

convict settlement primarily, and the majority of its two thousand people are either convicts or their guards and officials. There is a signal and radio station on the island, however, of comparatively recent establishment.

Products are of negligible importance, as the islands themselves are but for the radio station. I believe Fernando Noronha is about seven miles long by rather more than one mile wide, and do not recall any noteworthy flora or fauna except rabbit-grass and rats. There are no buildings bigger than a village freight warehouse to the best of my recollection; but as it is a place which scarcely comes under the eye of shipping folks, and my own visit there was some twenty years ago, little is known in general about it, and I think you can get more up-to-date information by securing a copy of the South America Pilot, Volume 1, from the Hydrographic Office, Washington, price 90 cents.

Tripping Down the Amazon

WHAT'S the outfit? Here you are:

Question:—"This is a small party of sailors figuring on going from the west coast of South America and traveling down the Amazon to the Atlantic on a pleasure and hunting trip. We are accustomed to traveling on rough rivers in canoes but have very little experience in the tropics.

We speak French and 'dobe Spanish. Had experience in gold and lead mines.

Have we very many chances to make this trip? What would it cost for a party of four? What are prospects of mining in the western mountains? Can an American get a title to mineral claims? Can we carry firearms? What kind? Give us a starting-point and a general outline."—WALTER HICKS, U. S. S. *Hamilton*, care of P. M., San Francisco, Cal.

Answer, by Dr. Goldsmith:—In order to reach the western coast of South America you might go from the Pacific coast, taking a steamer at San Francisco for Callao, Perú. The Pacific Mail runs boats on irregular schedule, taking thirty days with eighteen stops to reach this point. The fare would be about $290 first-class, and about $185 second-class.

Or you might come to New York and sail from here to Callao, Perú, *via* the Panama Canal. W. R. Grace & Co. run boats directly to that port from New York, and the fare is $260.

From Callao you go by train or by street railway to Lima, the capital, seven miles. In Lima all supplies can readily be gotten. Then you go by train to La Oroya, the eastern terminus of the railway; then on mule-back to Canchamayo, Perú, which is on the edge of the wilds.

From that point you might go in any one of several directions. Probably the best route would be along the Palcazu River, using canoes and taking Indians as guides, aids and porters. On either bank you have hundreds of miles to explore. There is plenty of traffic of one kind or another on the river. You could readily lose yourself by taking to the wilds in either direction.

To reach Brazil you would continue this route along the Palcazu to the river Pachitea, which is formed by the Palcazu and the Pichis. Following the Pachitea, you reach its junction with the great river Ucayali, and this brings you to the last town in Perú before you enter Brazilian territory—Iquitos.

From Lima to Iquitos you would require from 25 to 30 days. The railway fare is from 30 to 40 soles ($15 to $20), and you would have to pay the Indians very little—one or two cheap guns, pistols, or some such, regarding which I shall have more to say.

From Iquitos to the mouth of the Amazon at Para you could descend in a small steamer, the trip downward being made in about 10 days.

Back of all these rivers lies unexplored country, an immense area.

It would be well to reach the wilds during the so-called dry season, when it rains only in the afternoon and not all the time; that is, from April until July. This would mean that you ought to leave the United States about the middle of February.

Your equipment might well be bought in Lima. Of medicine you ought to have plenty of quinin, purgatives, iodin for insect-bites, laudanum for stomach-ache due to change of water, ammonia-water and bottles of Perry Davis' "Pain Killer," good for stomach-ache and along with ammonia helpful in case of scorpion stings. You would need a few strong, light-weight clothes. The weather will always be hot.

Your best footwear, roughing it, would be *alpargates*, to be bought in Lima. You would need a hammock, and you can secure one light enough to be worn around your waist as a belt. You ought to carry a good repeating rifle and some good pistol, as well as a machete; to be gotten in Lima. This serves as a weapon and an ax. Carry your supply of ammunition from the United States. You should start from Lima with all the tinned and dry provisions you can pack. Sugar and alcohol can be secured there.

Better than money in the wilds would be a good supply of cheap shotguns, muzzle-loading, with powder, shot and balls, and percussion caps. The Indians of this region have little use for cartridges. Also, carry along a big supply of knives, scissors, shears, needles, thread, white cloth, beads, and in general any small useful articles. Cheap pocket-knives and pistols, the latter old-fashioned and muzzle-loading, are all good for trading.

Guides can be gotten in Canchamayo or Iquitos from the local authorities.

You will learn about the Indian customs in the wilds when you get there; the customs of the civilized people of Perú are about those of other people of the same kind.

Carry enough ammunition to supply you during the length of your stay, about which only you can know. Any good medium-weight and medium-caliber repeating rifle would be satisfactory.

Until you reach the end of the railway you can buy food at hotels or restaurants. In all the rivers you will find plenty of fish. You should provide yourself with hooks and tackle of a primitive character such as you can get in Iquitos. There are plenty of bear, wild boar, armadillos, tapirs and a vast variety of birds.

You should have tinned or dried food for emergencies, and a good supply of chocolate, which can be gotten in the country. Do not bother about tents. With a good rubber poncho or blanket, to be gotten in Lima, you have something to put under you and over you.

You would have to pay duty on the articles you

would take in for trading, but not on your personal equipment.

You can get maps in Lima, and they are not expensive. If you look up señor Doctor don José Antonio de Lavalle, Avenida de Chorrillos, 348, Barranco, Lima, while you are there, he can tell you all about maps.

As there is gold scattered through the mountains and other parts of Perú, there is always a chance of success in prospecting, although it is an uncertain business. The best way to establish a claim is to find the mineral and then make a deal with the owner, in case the claim be found upon private property; and with the Government, if the claim should be upon Government property, of which there is still much. Claims may be established upon Government property by "denouncement" and registering and paying fifteen soles (about $7.50) every six months per each hectare (about two acres) of the claim. This covers the Government assessment, no matter how great the output of the claim.

Your so-called "'dobe Spanish," by which I assume you mean the Spanish of southwestern United States and northern Mexico, would be of good service to you. French would help you in Lima, but not in the wilds.

The Alaskan Dog-Team Harness

HERE'S the way the teams are hitched in the famous Yukon dog Derbies:

Question:—"Would you kindly give me a description of dog harness and sleighs as used in the Yukon Derbies?

Also would you say where a person might expect to find husky dogs for sale?

Mr. Ed. L. Carson of 'Ask Adventure' referred me to you."—ROY E. MCFARLANE, New Liskeard, Ont., Can.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—Mr. Ed. L. Carson had his nerve with him when he referred you to me for sleds and harness. He knows as much about it, presumably, as I do. Go to any library and look at any standard work on Alaska for the general appearance.

In general, in the running-races a light basket sleigh is used, and the dogs are hitched two and two to the extent of perhaps six or eight, headed by a leader, single file. The collars are like horse-collars, made preferably of moosehide stubbed with reindeer hair. They have traces, a back and belly strap, same as a horse, and the traces end in a single-tree; the two on each side are attached to a double-tree.

In short, the rig is the same as with a multiple horse-team, even to the chain beyond the pole on the first pair when four or six horses are used in freighting. But there is no pole to the sled, the chain (rope rather, with dogs) extending back to the sled. Sometimes there is a kind of stretcher for the trees, at other times no double-tree or stretcher, but the side ropes from the central lead rope are long enough so that when they reach the single-tree and the dog is tugging he is not pulling too much sidewise.

The heads of the dogs are held in close to the lead-rope by short cords or light chains fastened from their neck-collars (not pulling-collars) to the lead-rope. Webbing is always used for tugs and bands, and German (Liberty!) snaps. The rig and sled have been very highly developed technically by the masters of the craft in Nome and the Yukon. But the above states the principles. The form of the basket sled you are no doubt familiar with.

I do not know where you could buy huskies except in Alaska. Probably in Seattle, though.

Chances in Southern China

THE old rule still applies: Get your job before you leave the U. S. A.:

Question:—"I would like to have you give me some information on southern China—climate, customs, etc.

I hear that there are companies in this country that send men over there for trading and engineering projects. If that is correct could you give me a line on some of them?

I would be obliged if you would not have my name printed in *Adventure*."— —— ——, Ridgewood, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—Canton, the principal city in southern China, lies in the same latitude as Havana, Cuba. The temperature in Winter rarely falls below freezing point, and rises in Summer to a maximum of 98 degrees. This applies also to Hongkong.

The rainy season, from May to October, called the southwest monsoon season, is usually very hot and humid. The average rainfall in Kwangtung is 70 inches. Cantonese and several tribal dialects are spoken there.

The population of Canton is over a million. There are several cities which have between 100,000 and 500,000 inhabitants.

The principal industries are weaving of silk, grass-cloth and cotton, manufacture of matting, paper, hosiery, porcelain, fire-crackers, silverware, hardwood furniture, ivory, lacquer, jade, embroideries, etc.

In the chief ports the mode of living is much the same as you find in American cities, Hongkong being equipped with a good system of street railways. The largest American concern operating in southern China is the Standard Oil Company. I would suggest that you write to that company in New York, stating fully your qualifications, and you may be able to connect up with them.

Size of Six-Year Old Lake Trout

HANDY to know if you're stocking your waters:

Question:—"Have been informed some Wisconsin lakes were stocked with lake trout six years ago.

1. About how large would they be now?
2. When is the season open?
3. What tackle or bait would you advise?
4. What time of day or night is best for catching them?

Would prefer to have my name withheld."— —— ——, Escanaba, Michigan.

Answer, by Mr. St. Johns:—The growth of fishes depends a great deal on local conditions. The lake trout of six years, under the most favorable circumstances, such as prevail in the Great Lakes for instance, would weigh almost if not quite five

pounds. In smaller waters, such as inland lakes, the growth would be slower and in some lakes the maximum weight, regardless of age, is about six pounds. However, the fish that were planted six years ago, providing the planting was a success, would weigh about four pounds by this time.

The method and tackle used in taking lake trout is governed by local conditions, such as depth of water, custom, etc. For very deep lakes—and they are always found in the deepest holes in any lake—use a braided copper line or, if a linen or cotton line is used, a very heavy sinker; from 4 to 16 ounces, depending on depth of lake. Copper line, however, is better as a light sinker is all that is required for great depths, and for ordinary waters the line itself will be heavy enough.

The best bait is a large minnow, alive if possible, fished deep and moved slowly in mid-Summer. When the water is quite cold a copper trolling-spoon does nicely. Early morning or evening generally the best time to catch fresh-water fishes, but when fishing for lake trout in very deep water it does not make so much difference.

The Wisconsin trout season opens May 1.

Minerals of New Zealand

HOW many of us know that these far-off islands are a Cripple Creek, a Comstock Lode and a Pocahontas District, all in one? 'Twas news to me at least:

Question:—"Being interested in minerals, you would oblige me very much if you would supply me with some general information as to this line of business in New Zealand."—JOHN ROMEYN, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—I presume you want to know what is doing in the world of mineralogy in New Zealand and what our operations are. I was reading only today that some of our gold has just been exported in the raw state to the United States.

We are wonderfully endowed in minerals—precious and utilitarian. The best steam-producing coal in the world—didn't our Westport coal save the *Calliope* in the Samoan tornado many years ago?

We mine gold on the west coast of the South Island and also in the far north of the North Island. Away back in the sixties there were gold-rushes to both these areas that were second only to the preceding Californian rushes. Indeed, it was these very rushes that give the first impetus to settlement in New Zealand.

We also have silver, but to a much lesser degree. During the recent war period the British Imperial Government bought over $900,000 worth of sheelite from New Zealand's mines. In the Nelson district they have a great vein of asbestos. The ironworks of Great Britain are experimenting with our iron-sand deposits along the Taranaki sea-front and iron deposits in other parts of the dominion. And with it all we have scarcely scratched the surface mineralogically.

If you are interested you can come over and get a miner's right and go out prospecting—and the Government is subsidizing the prospector and our Mines Department is offering every encouragement to those who go out looking for and finding minerals. I like your chances of success if you know anything at all about the game, for this is a veritable treasure-house for the geologist and the mineralogist.

Revolver *vs.* Automatic

MR. Wiggins has some decided opinions on the subject:

Question:—"1. When one is told automatics jam, just what does it mean? Does a jam put a gun out of business for several minutes or is it merely a matter of working it once by hand? In other words is it a delay of a few seconds or half an hour?

I shall appreciate your careful thought to the question because there are many things I like about automatic pistols—rapidity of fire, compactness, quickness of reloading, handiness of being able to carry a few extra magazines ready loaded. But if they jam and there seems to be no doubt on the subject, and if this jam puts the gun out of business for half an hour or even five minutes, to my mind they are not worth having. Your answer will settle it once and for all as far as I am concerned.

2. For a really heavy gun which do you consider the best of the following, or do you know of one better than any of them?

Colt New Service Target; D. A., chambered for .45 Colt, .44 S. & W. Special, .44 S. &. W. Russian.

S. &. W. .44 Military; D. A., chambered for .45 Colt; .44 S. & W. Special, .44 S. &. W. Russian.

Colt single action chambered for .45 Colt, .44 S. & W. Special, .44 S. & W. Russian.

S. & W. Russian model S. A.; chambered for .45 Colt, .44 S. & W. Special, .44 S. & W. Russian. Note the last has tip-up action. Is not that a fault?

3. Do you consider the hammer safety on the Colt more advantageous than the cylinder lock on the S. & W.?

4. Have you ever known a good revolver kept in good condition refuse to action?

In figuring on the above guns please take the following into consideration: Absolute reliability, great shocking-power, accuracy. And then as a secondary consideration consider this: If one can get practically the same results with two guns would naturally prefer the one with the least kick. Weight counts too; every ounce makes that much more to pack. Compactness of build, as I have a rather small hand.

Personally I figured the Colt New Service Target, with ordinary sights, 6-inch barrel, chambered for .44 S. & W. Russian would be pretty good. I know it is a very big gun, but I like that hammer safety. I always seem to put the Colt ahead of the S. & W.; but what do you think? Please understand I am banking on what you say so do me a favor and put this letter on one side until you are feeling good and then answer it carefully. Get me? Thanks.

P. S. The Colt Army Special .38 metal-point bullet fits in fine in every way except what after all is the most important. If you had to stop something real bad with a snap shot and did not hit a vital point would it have enough shocking-power to do it? I don't think so; do you?

I know the metal-point bullet helps penetration and does not touch the rifling; but does it stop the shock-power at all?

Re the .38 Colt and S. & W. cartridge; don't you favor the Colt on account of flat point?

Very sorry to give you so much trouble, but I want reliable information and don't know where else to get it."—S. H. PROCTOR, North Vancouver, Can.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—1. By jamming we

refer to the malfunctioning of the mechanism of the pistol, due to the failure of the cartridge to enter the chamber of the barrel, by the failure of the mechanism to eject the empty case or to close completely, due to a bad cartridge, sand or grit, or any other cause. The time the gun is out of commission varies greatly. I have seen some so locked shot by malfunctions that the services of a gun smith were required to put them in order; these occurrences are very rare, and the average operation needed to put them "smokin' " again is merely to remove the magazine, operate the action with the hands, and insert the magazine once more.

But the good old "sixgun" keeps coughing as long as it's loaded, I find. Use in a sandy country seems to be the *bête noire* of the automatic pistol, as there are some places that will accumulate sand; see the remarks of some fellows who were in the "Get Villa" expedition into Mexico; I have read in magazines that they sometimes charged without even drawing the pistols, knowing they would not operate on account of the sand that had accumulated during the march over the desert.

Of course, this might never happen to nine men out of ten, but the odd time is when you need the gun the worst way, as a rule. Get a good revolver, is my advice—Colt, Smith & Wesson, or Webley. And for the average I recommend a .45 caliber at that.

2. While you will of course understand that I do not care to draw comparisons in any two makes or models of revolvers, I will do this much: Colt New Service or Single Action Army, 5½ inch barrels, in .45 caliber, or the Model 1917 Smith & Wesson, using the .45 automatic Colt cartridge in clips of three cartridges each. Or the latter arm in .45 Colt cartridge, to be had on special order. I have one of these, and two of my closest friends are using the same combination. All are well pleased with the revolvers so prepared.

I have used the tip-up model S. & W. extensively, and have two of them in .44 Russian caliber at the present time. I never had any trouble with them in the least, but regard them as being more easily put out of action by hard usage, or in sandy country, then the solid-frame weapons.

3. I consider both Colt and Smith & Wesson to be perfectly safe, but like the front cylinder lock of the S. & W. over the loose Colt.

I never knew either revolver to refuse to function when in perfect order.

I have considered all the points of your letter, and can not see any better gun, under all conditions, than the old Colt Single-Action Army in .45 caliber. It's just as trouble-proof as ever it has been since the colonel introduced it about eighty-four years ago. I think the present model of the S. A. A. is mechanically the same, in regards to lockwork, as the first Colt was, the old Patterson model, although that had a concealed trigger that sprang out on cocking the hammer. And of course the changes necessitated by the use of metallic ammunition.

The old gun is a little slow to load, and it's heavy, but I can truly say that it will shoot when most others are gone to the junk-pile. Of course, if this is printed, I'll be apt to have gunmen athwart my frame ten deep, but it's the goods.

As regards the comparative merits as a killer of the .38 Special in the metal-pointed or lead bullets, I really can't see much difference, but what there is, is in favor of the older type of soft-lead bullet, in my opinion. I have never seen the actual work of either in men.

It's my experience that the revolver does not develop enough velocity to expand the soft-point bullet in flesh, but a hollow point will open up, at least in the .22 calibers, used in revolvers on the common gray digger squirrel. But I think the metal-pointed ones would not be stopped by a pocketbook, as one was that hit a friend of mine a few years since when an enemy opened up on him and his wife in a court-room. My friend found the .32 caliber lead bullet in his pocketbook on his hip.

Now, I have done the best I could; if anything is not sufficiently clear come again. I'm at your service any time.

My stand on automatics may seem unjust, but you asked for my really honest opinion; you have it. Get a good revolver.

Death of Mr. St. John

THE newspaper has just brought us the following news:

> CHICAGO, Sept. 29.—The death of Larry St. John, conductor of a hunting and fishing column in the *Chicago Tribune*, was announced today. He died Sunday (Sept. 25th) in the North Woods.

We have received no further particulars. Mr. St. John was the "Ask Adventure" expert in charge of the section covering Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. He was a good colleague, and we announce his death with genuine regret.

A Primer on British East

ELEMENTARY facts, but handy to know:

Question:—"Will you please answer the following questions in regard to British East Africa:

1. What are labor conditions? State cost of native labor.
2. What is the price of farmland? What is the price of timberland?
3. What kind of timber predominates, and average size?
4. Is there ready sale for such lumber?
5. Is the climate healthy?
6. Are there any reptiles?
7. What are the principal crops grown?
8. Is there ready market for same?
9. What is the nature of the land in natural state?
10. Is the country well watered?
11. Is the drinking-water good?
12. Can tractors be used to advantage?"—J. STANLEY SCOTT, Fredericton, N. B., Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—Apologies for delay due to my shifting camp.

1. Can't give exact labor conditions, as such have undoubtedly changed since war. Before, used to pay native laborers about five rupees (say $2) per

month. Head boys a little more. Goanese for clerking about ten dollars; white about thirty.

2. Can't possibly hazard a guess at price of farm or timber land as it would only mislead you and varies tremendously according to proximity to railroad.

3. Timber: Can't again, for most or all are native woods. To give you an idea: A species of cedar and olive, the latter a particularly fine-grained wood; another native wood giving breadth and height, making splendid red hardwood; a species of very hard wood resembling teak. If you write to the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, Nairobi, B. E. A., he could probably give you technical details. Average size roughly about fifty feet and diameter about two.

4. Used to be fair sale, but now probably has increased very much as the country is rapidly going ahead.

5. Climate healthy except lowlands near the coast.

6. Plenty of snakes and lizards.

7. Principal crops: Fibers, cotton, barley, oats, potatoes.

8. Yes.

9. Dense forest or open, rolling bush and scattered trees, parklike.

10. In parts; in others no.

11. Yes, generally speaking, in comparison with other African countries.

12. Yes.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

HARPER, WALTER A. Last heard of in Hollister, Cal. Write to your old pal BOOLS.

MORRIS, WALTER. Please write to your old friend. Have good news. Saw your brother a while ago.—Address FRED VOIGHT, 128 W. 55th St., Bayonne, N. J.

RAVENS, ARTHUR. Age between forty and fifty. Last heard of in San Francisco, Cal. Any information will be appreciated.—Address ARTHUR RAVENS WALTON, Clifton, Peterhead, South Australia.

SHULTZ, MRS. FRANK. Formerly Rosey Moffet of Albia, Iowa. Please communicate with me immediately.—CORA E. MOFFET, Alaska, Sask., Canada.

MOFFET, CHAUNCEY. When last heard of was engine inspector in Galesburg, Ill. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CHESTER E. MOFFET, care of The *Gazette*, Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, Canada.

FREDRICKSEN, FRANK R. Not heard from since 1915. Any information will be appreciated.—Address his sister, IRENE FREDRICKSEN, 700 S. Taylor Ave., Oak Park, Ill.

BONIFACE, W. J. Last heard of in Chicago with B. & O. Railroad. Please write to your old friend "REX" WEST.—"OLLERA," Blacktown, New South Wales.

BRACKEN, ALVA L. Left home April 25th, 1921, and not heard from since. Any information will be appreciated by his wife.—Address L. T. 435, care of *Adventure.*

BRONSON, D. D. Danny or Bronse. Last seen leaving Washington, D. C., August 1920. Known to have gone West in dun car *via* Canada. Age forty years, five feet nine inches, light eyes, 147 pounds. Lodge member. Good mixer. Fond of society. Come back.—Address PALS, care of *Adventure.*

MATHIAS, F. Write at once or come regardless of circumstances. Good news now, anxiously waiting.—Address E. O. F.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

MCCUNE, THOMAS. Last heard of in Burlington, Iowa, 1919. Any information will be appreciated by his mother or cousin.—Address MISS MABEL ADDIS, 302 Water St., Monongah, W. Va.

SMITH, GORDON (Buck). Last heard of in Birmingham, Ala. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—MRS. T. C. LEWIS, R. F. D. 1, Baton Rouge, La.

O. W. R.: "THE KID" What's on the program for this Winter? Larry Williams remember that night on Hollywood Rd., in Hong Kong? What do you say? At present in Gibraltar, but address—SAL—46 Maplewood Ave., N. Kenosha, Wis.

TEETER, JOHN PEDRO. Left home in Frazer, Okla., 1890. Last heard from at Galveston, in November 1900. Was a meat-cutter. Age about fifty. Any information will be appreciated by his brother—Address LEO TEETER, Box 74, Sentinel, Okla.

PUTHEE, LEOPOLD. Last lived at El Paso, Texas, on Florence Street. Discharged from U. S. Army, February 19, 1921, at Camp Eustis, Virginia. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CHARLES N. WEIDDIS, 30 Pensauken Ave., Pensauken, N. J.

BRUNE, FRANK. Age twenty, auburn hair, height five feet ten inches, weight 170 pounds; well-educated Italian. Any information will be appreciated.—Address E. C. MACCAULEY, Republic Ins. Co., Dallas, Texas.

GOLDIE, JOE or JOHN. When last heard of was a fireman employed on the Fort Worth and Denver Railway. Last seen at Amarillo, Texas. Any information will be appreciated.—Address G. DONNELLY, Box 236, Purcell, Okla.

HOGUE, CLYDE. Left home fourteen years ago. Age thirty-five, about five feet four inches tall, brown hair. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his mother.—MRS. NETTIE HOGUE, 809 Dennor St., Kalamazoo, Mich.

BLUEWELL, JAMES G. (Chicken Blue). Age about thirty-six. Last heard from when he left Canal Zone, 1914. Any information will be appreciated.—Address O. E. McCOIN, WM. RAMEY or ED SPEARMAN, Box 571, Cristobal, Canal Zone.

OLMSTEAD, LELA JEAN. Of Gregory, South Dakota. Please communicate with your former pupil.—C. E. MOFFET, care of The *Gazette*, Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, Canada.

BENNETTS. We are rounding out our family-tree. Will any Bennetts originating in Ohio or coming directly from Ireland please communicate?—Address GRACE and RUTH BENNETT, Hay Springs, Nebr.

WOULD like to hear from any of the fellows who were the armed guard crew on the S. S. *Sobral* in 1918. Am still in the outfit.—Write HARRY C. HOFFMAN, Receiving Ship, Mare Island, Cal.

FITZPATRICK, JOHN F. Left Toronto, Canada, March, 1904. Last heard of working in copper-mines at Chesaw, Washington, about 1908 or 1909. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—WM. FITZPATRICK, 30 Leightbourne Ave., Toronto, Ont., Canada.

THE following have been inquired for in either the December 10th or December 20th issues of Adventure. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ANDERSON, OSCAR; Bell, Tom; Benedict, Otis; Bonnie, L. F.; Burke, James; Chamberos, Onesirne; Clark, W. E.; Craft, Mrs. Hariet; Corad, James; Davis, Mrs. Nora Brazille; Duva, Sven; Entwissle, Martha; Gould, Jay K.; Graham, Mrs. Mary; Hansl, Proctor Jr.; Hazzard, Herbert; Hindes, George; Howard, Jack S.; Jones, A.; Landers, Morris; Lee, John; Marlin, Michel Jefferson; Nelson, Milton; Niman Samuel; Smith or Miller, Eddie E.; Sprout, Robert R.; Stuart, Arthur P.; Thayer, Otis Elmer; Vaughn, Ernestine.

MISCELLANEOUS—Bob; Former member of Batt. B. 149th F. A. Rainbow Div.; J. G. W.; Number One R. 724, 942; Relatives of Charles Merinar.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ALDRIDGE, F. P.; Barrett, Raymond; Bellinger, C. J.; Bennett, Mr. and Mrs.; Bertsch, Elizabeth; Blighton, Frank; Bonner, J. S.; Buckley, Ray; Bushley, Ed. F.; Butterfield, E.; Carpenter, Robert S.; Carr, John; Casselberry, Lane P.; Chief Hailstorm; "Chink"; Clark, Wilfred J.; Clingham, Charles; Coles, Bobby; Connor, A. M.; Cook, Elliott D.; Cook, Wm. N.; Corbett, Fred P.; Courtlandt, Victor; Craun, Galen E.; De Brissac, Ricardo; Evans, B. R.; Fisher, 1st. Sgt. R.; Gale, Geo. A.; Gallagher, Owen; Harris, Walter J.; Haskins, S. S.; Hooker, Wm. Francis; Howard, Charlie; Hughes, Frank E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Irving, Thos. L.; Jackson, Robert R.; Klug, Chas. C.; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kutcher, Sgt. Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lander, Harry; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Wm. R., M. D.; Lekki, Michael; "Lonely Jock;" Lovett, Harold S.; MacDonald, Tony; McAdams, W. B.; McKee, Al.; MacIntosh, D. T. A.; McNair, Henry S.; Mendelson, Aleck; Minor, Dr. John; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nylander, Towne J.; O'Hara, Jack; Parker, Dr. M.; Parker, G. A.; Parrott, Pvt. D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Phipps, Corbett C.; Pigeon, A. H.; Posner, Geo. A.; Pulis, H. F.; Raines, Wm. L.; Rich, Wagoner Bob; Roberts, Walter; Rogan, Chas. B.; Rudolph, F.; Rundle, Merrill G.; Ryder, H. S.; St. Claire, Fred; Schmidt, G.; Scott, James F.; Shaw, Albert; Sloan, Charles, A.; Smith, C. O.; Spencer, Robert; Starr, Ted; Stocking, C. B.; Terry, Lambert; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Ward, Frank B.; Williams, Roger V.; Wiley, Floyd; Woeller, Erich; J. C. H.; T. W. S.; W. W. T.; S. No. 177284; L. T. 439; Third Officer S. S. Lake Elmdale; W. S.—XV; No. 2480.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at the address given do not reach you.—Address L. B. BARRETTO, care of *Adventure*.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JANUARY 10TH ISSUE

Besides the novel and the serial mentioned on the second page of this issue the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE SHELL-BACK — *Henry Leverage*
An old-timer on a tin ship in the Bering.

MONK RIDES HIS LUCK — *Charles Victor Fischer*
Galloping dominoes, and the rolling decks of the U. S. N.

THE TAIL-ENDER — *Robert J. Horton*
Cow-puncher sleuthing in the county jail.

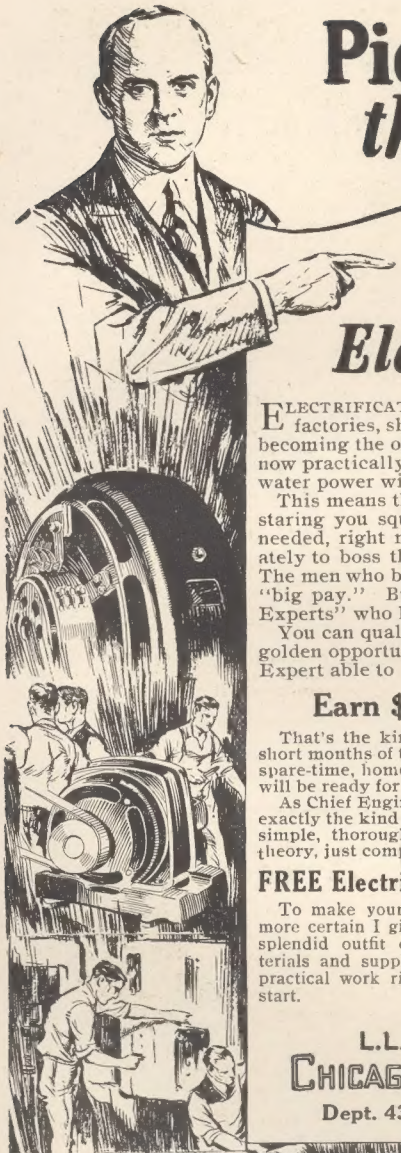
HEART HUNGER — *George Gilbert*
—and a trapper's conscience.

THE SWORD OF THE PROPHET — *Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur*
Pierre Faidit fights in Spain.

LOST DIGGINGS A Five-Part Story Conclusion — *Hugh Pendexter*
A rope around the neck of *Shoshoni Hale*.

IN KAFFIR KRAALS An Off-the-Trail Article* — *Santie Sabalala*
V—Blood on *Upina's* stabbing-spear
Zulu *impis* on a smashing raid.
*(*See foot-note on first contents page.*)

Pick Your job in *this* Big-Pay field ~



Be an *Electrical Expert*

ELECTRIFICATION is sweeping the country. In homes, factories, shops, farms, railroads, everywhere, it is fast becoming the one great source of power. Ten years from now practically everything now driven by steam, horse or water power will be controlled by electricity.

This means that the greatest opportunity of your life is staring you square in the face. Men are needed, badly needed, right now, *more* will be needed almost immediately to boss the big Electrical jobs that are projected. The men who boss these jobs are going to draw real pay—"big pay." But they will be trained men—"Electrical Experts" who know electricity from the ground up.

You can qualify for one of these jobs, *you* can seize this golden opportunity. You, too, can become an Electrical Expert able to

Earn $3,500 to $10,000 a Year

That's the kind of money you want and can earn. A few short months of training under me, through my easily learned, spare-time, home-study course in practical electricity, and you will be ready for one of these big jobs.

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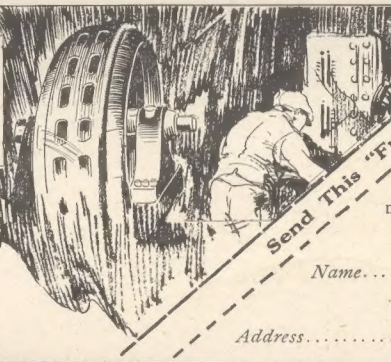

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THE COOKE TRAINED MAN IS THE "BIG-PAY MAN"

The Secret of Being a Convincing Talker

How I Learned It In One Evening

By George Raymond

"HAVE you heard the news about Frank Jordan?"

This question quickly brought me to the little group which had gathered in the center of the office. Jordan and I had started with the Great Eastern Machinery Co., within a month of each other, four years ago. A year ago, Jordan was taken into the accounting division and I was sent out as salesman. Neither of us was blessed with an unusual amount of brilliancy, but we "got by" in our new jobs well enough to hold them.

Imagine my amazement then, when I heard:

"Jordan's just been made Treasurer of the Company!"

I could hardly believe my ears. But there was the "Notice to Employees" on the bulletin board telling about Jordan's good fortune.

Now I know that Jordan was a capable fellow, quiet, and unassuming, but I never would have picked him for any such sudden rise. I knew, too, that the Treasurer of the Great Eastern had to be a big man, and I wondered how in the world Jordan landed the place.

The first chance I got, I walked into Jordan's new office, and, after congratulating him warmly, I asked him to let me "in" on the details of how he jumped ahead so quickly. His story is so intensely interesting that I am going to repeat it as closely as I remember.

"I'll tell you just how it happened, George, because you may pick up a pointer or two that will help *you*.

"You remember how scared I used to be whenever I had to talk to the chief? You remember how you used to tell me that every time I opened my mouth I put my foot into it, meaning of course, that every time I spoke I got into trouble? You remember when Ralph Sinton left to take charge of the Western office and I was asked to present him with the loving cup the boys gave him, how flustered I was and how I couldn't say a word because there were people around? You remember how confused I used to be every time I met new people? I couldn't say what I wanted to say when I wanted to say it; and I determined that if there was any possible chance to learn how to talk I was going to do it.

"The first thing I did was to buy a number of books on public speaking, but they seemed to be meant for those who wanted to become orators, whereas what I wanted to learn was not only how to speak in public but how to speak to individuals under various conditions in business and social life.

"A few weeks later, just as I was about to give up hope of ever learning how to talk interestingly, I read an announcement stating that Dr. Frederick Houk Law had just completed a new course in business talking and public speaking entitled 'Mastery of Speech.' The course was offered on approval without money in advance, so since I had nothing whatever to lose by examining the lessons, I sent for them and in a few days they arrived. I glanced through the entire eight lessons, reading the headings and a few paragraphs here and there, and in about an hour the whole secret of effective speaking was opened to me.

"For example, I learned why I had always lacked confidence, why talking had always seemed something to be dreaded, whereas it is really the simplest thing in the world to 'get up and talk.' I learned how to secure complete attention to what I was saying and how to make everything I said interesting, forceful and convincing. I learned the art of listening, the value of silence, and the power of brevity. Instead of being funny at the wrong time, I learned how and when to use humor with telling effect.

"But perhaps the most wonderful thing about the lessons were the actual examples of what things to say and when to say them to meet every condition. I found that there was a knack in making oral reports to my superiors. I found that there was a right way and a wrong way to present complaints, to give estimates, and to issue orders.

"I picked up some wonderful pointers about how to give my opinions, about how to answer complaints, about how to ask the bank for a loan, about how to ask for extensions. Another thing that struck me forcibly was that instead of antagonizing people when I didn't agree with them, I learned how to bring them around to my way of thinking in the most pleasant sort of way. Then, of course, along with those lessons there were chapters on speaking before large audiences, how to find material for talking and speaking, how to talk to friends, how to talk to servants, and how to talk to children.

"Why, I got the secret the very first evening and it was only a short time before I was able to apply all of the principles and found that my words were beginning to have an almost magical effect upon everybody to whom I spoke. It seemed that I got things done instantly, where formerly, as you know, what I said 'went in one ear and out of the other.' I began to acquire an executive ability that surprised me. I smoothed out difficulties like a true diplomat. In my talks with the chief I spoke clearly, simply, convincingly. Then came my first promotion since I entered the accounting department. I was given the job of answering complaints, and I made good. From that I was given the job of making collections. When Mr. Buckley joined the Officers' Training Camp, I was made treasurer. Between you and I, George, my salary is now $7,500 a year and I expect it will be more from the first of the year.

"And I want to tell you sincerely that I attribute my success solely to the fact that I learned how to talk to people."

* * * * *

When Jordan finished, I asked him for the address of the publishers of Dr. Law's course, and he gave it to me. I sent for it and found it to be exactly as he had stated. After studying the eight simple lessons I began to sell to people who had previously refused to listen to me at all. After four months of record-breaking sales during the dullest season of the year, I received a wire from the chief asking me to return to the home office. We had quite a long talk in which I explained how I was able to break sales records—and I was appointed Sales Manager at almost twice my former salary. I know that there was nothing in me that had changed except that I had acquired the ability to talk where formerly I simply used "words without reason." I can never thank Jordan enough for telling me about Dr. Law's Course in Business Talking and Public Speaking. Jordan and I are both spending all our spare time making public speeches and Jordan is being talked about now as mayor of our little town.

Don't send any money. Merely mail the coupon or write a letter and the complete Course will be sent, all charges prepaid, at once. If you are not entirely satisfied send it back any time within five days after you receive it, and you will owe nothing.

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